

BIOGRAPHY
OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,

WITH CRITICAL REMARKS UPON THE WORKS OF ANCIENT AND
MODERN AUTHORS, AND SOME ACCOUNT
OF THEIR HISTORY :

ALSO AN EXAMINATION INTO THE PRESENT POSITION OF
ENGLISH AMONG THE LANGUAGES
OF THE WORLD

✓
BY

ARTHUR MAC ARTHUR, LL. D.
OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

AUTHOR OF "EDUCATION IN ITS RELATION TO MANUAL
INDUSTRY," ETC.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
W. H. LOWDERMILK & Co.
1893



56010 Y

— A —

FE 1075
M2

COPYRIGHT, 1893,
BY ARTHUR MAC ARTHUR,
OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

PRINTED BY
GLENS FALLS (N. Y.) PRINTING CO.

PREFACE.

Probably the most illiterate persons in England were those who first spoke and heard the English language. Its very existence was threatened by Norman-French laws and forms of speech, but the old Saxon element was still a numerous body, and refused to surrender its vernacular. The two races were ultimately blended into one people, and their language was the natural result of their situation. The following volume is a history of this language alone. It is not written in the style of a treatise on the subject of comparative philology, which has become one of the most profound of all the sciences, yet the study of our own language is a matter of the greatest importance, and the general diffusion of this knowledge is a prime inducement to the most earnest effort for its general instruction among those who speak it. I am persuaded that this end can be attained much better on its own merits than by making it a single feature in a concourse of all languages, and subordinating it to a comparative standard with others. This work is intended to be a practical account of our mother tongue, written in such popular form as will attract the average speaker of native English. I do not underrate the learning of the comparative philologist, nor the value of his work. I am quite sure that there is nothing in physical science more astonishing than the discoveries thus brought about in ethnology and in the history of lost races. Nations that have left no record of themselves have been traced out on the map of human story, and languages that have perished with those who spoke them have been rehabilitated from words that exist only in groundless fragments.

The study of our own language should not be altogether to show its value as a medium of communication with mankind, but also to understand its meaning, its history, and its literature. The most extensive erudition may be employed in its examination, and yet the general intelligence of any man of ordinary education can learn

all that relates to its progress and development, though he has not the vast learning of the philologist. I therefore intend to give its history in such manner as can be readily understood by the ordinary reader of English without repelling him by technical terminology, or by the still more confusing perplexity of innumerable references and foot notes, that are so useful to the scientific student, but only serve to bewilder and discourage those who do not care to go outside of their own language. Nor do I intend to indulge in that minuteness of detail which by its multiplicity overwhelms the memory of the layman till he gives up the task as hopeless. The intention is, therefore, to give a plain and easy account of English from the earliest times after the Conquest down to the beginning of the present century, and to set it off with critical remarks and slight biographical sketches of ancient and modern authors who have used it in composing their works. In carrying out this plan I have given selections, but not sufficient to weary the reader. The language of the early writers needs to be translated, for no one can understand it who has not made Early English a special study. There are but few who have pursued that study, and as this book is designed for those who have not, rather than for those who are learned in that remote literature, I have been careful not to draw too largely from these old store-houses of our vernacular, but still to give such passages as may afford a clear idea of what our language was in its early stages. I have also been careful to confine my selections to such authors only as may be considered landmarks in its progressive development; such, for instance, as Layamon (Brut), Robert of Gloucester, John of Brunne, Barbour, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, etc. The book is not a history of English literature, and there is no detailed sequence of authors, but those are selected who can afford a view of the condition of our tongue at the times in which they wrote.

The effort is to present the subject so that all readers may acquire a fair insight into the successive stages of its progress, and learn the English history of the English language without being called upon to understand either Latin or Greek, or even any of the modern tongues. The absence of technical terms and expressions is a necessary feature in such a treatise, but occasionally it happens that I cannot express my meaning without a term of that

character; the definition will be obvious, however, from the context or from what has been already explained.

In the remote wilds of Northern Europe a number of nations existed, each having a distinct name but all speaking dialects of the same language. The Saxons were one of these tribes, and several others who were near neighbors joined them on their settlement in Britain. The Angles, who were probably the most numerous of the confederates, gave their name to the island, and the Saxons on the other hand gave their name to the race, and the names of both were merged into the double compound Anglo-Saxon. At that time Germany consisted of many nationalities that were known under the general terms of Saxons, Goths, Germans, and Teutons. We therefore speak of our forefathers' speech as Saxon, Gothic, Germanic, and Teutonic. These, however, mean the same people and the same language, and in speaking of the English it is understood by any one or all of these names, and in that sense I use them interchangeably in the present volume.

The division of the language into chronological periods has been objected to by some late writers on the ground that it is the "English language," whether Saxon or Semi-Saxon, Early English, or Middle and Modern English. But while this is an arbitrary arrangement, I am convinced that it leads to a better understanding of the different phases through which it has passed, just as we speak of a human being in his infancy, childhood, adolescence, and maturity. In observing the usual arrangement I treat of the Semi-Saxon, Early English, Middle English, and Modern English as marking somewhat distinct steps in the development of our tongue. They are not marked off by sharp lines of separation, but blend into each other like the hues of the rainbow, and the writers often belong to the last and first parts of the adjacent periods. The transition to our present tongue consisted principally in destroying the inflexional forms of the Anglo-Saxon. The Semi-Saxon was the first perceptible stage in this change, and the other divisions were each marked by the progress made in the same direction until inflexions had almost disappeared in Modern English. Other changes coincided with these successive periods, such as the disuse of the oblique cases in nouns and adjectives, and the substitution of prepositions in their places. The dialects also varied. The Northern was the

first to assume a literary style, and preceded by more than a century those further south in getting rid of these terminations, and in placing words in position one after the other according to the sense. These distinctions justify to some extent at least the chronological arrangement it is proposed to adopt in this work.

The object of this book is to excite an interest in the mind of the general reader for his mother tongue for its own sake, and thus to kindle a desire for its study and diffusion. It seems a strange anomaly that we should devote so many years to the study of other tongues and devote no time to our own, and this would excite surprise were the inconsistency not so common. But I think a new era is dawning, and our noble English speech is attracting the interest not only of those who speak it, but as a general and useful accomplishment. To aid in this movement is the design of the author, and he hopes that the day will soon come when the history of its rise, progress, and development will become a general branch of public instruction.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	I-21
1. The Origin of Language. 2. Our Mother Tongue. 3. The Saxons. 4. Early English. 5. The Aryans. 6. Indo-European Languages. 7. Saxon Immigration from Asia. 8. Saxon Poems.	
CHAPTER II.	22-38
1. The Saxons in Britain. 2. The Anglo-Saxons. 3. Cædmon, the Poet. 4. Alfred the Great. 5. The Goths and Danes. 6. Anglo-Saxon the Basis of English.	
CHAPTER III.	39-69
1. The Norman Conquest. 2. French and Anglo-Saxon. 3. Semi-Saxon to 1250. 4. Brut of Layamon. 5. The Ancren Riwe (Ancient Rule). 6. Anglo-Saxon Inflection. 7. Small Quantity of French in Semi-Saxon. 8. The Ormulum. 9. Genesis and Exodus. 10. Owl and Nightingale.	
CHAPTER IV.—EARLY ENGLISH.—1250-1350.	70-110
1. Early English, 1250-1350. 2. Three Principal Dialects. 3. Literature Begins with Poetry. 4. The Minstrels of this Period. 5. Robert of Gloucester. His Works Described. Changes Made by Him in Early English. 6. Robert Manning. His Works and Genius. He Stems the Tide of Norman-French Innovations. His Influence upon our Language. 7. Cursor Mundi and Genesis and Exodus. Paraphrasing Bible Stories into Early English. 8. The Ormulum. An Attempt to Settle Orthography. 9. The Ayenbite of Inwit. The Southern Dialect. 10. Mediæval Saintship. Its Effect on Early English. Written in the Popular Speech. 11. Early English Alliterative Poems. 12. The Hermit of Hampole. Sketch of His Life and Works. His Use of Saxon Terms in Preaching. 13. Moral and Religious Pieces. 14. The Arthur Romances. The Series of the Round Table Recounted. Their Influence on Modern Literature. 15. Hugh of the Royal Palace. He Drops the Saxon Inflections. 16. Walter Mapes. 17. Merlin, the Wizard. 18. Sir Thomas Malory. 19. William of Parlerne. Grammatical Anomalies. 20. Havelok, the Dane. Fluctuating Forms of Speech. 21. King Horn. Midland Forms. 22. Life of Alexander. The Commencement of Norman-French. 23. The Geste Historical. Dropping Inflections. History of Troy, the Ancient Town. 24. Roger Bacon. 25. Henry Bracton. 26. Duns Scotus. 27. William Occam and the Schoolmen. The Words Contributed Still in Use. 28. Changes and Improvements in the Transition from Semi-Saxon to Early English.	
CHAPTER V.—MIDDLE ENGLISH.—1350-1550.	111-125
Historical Introduction to Middle English.	

CHAPTER VI.—MIDDLE ENGLISH.—1350-1550. 126-152

1. Sir John Mandeville. His Travels. The First Attempt in Prose in Middle English. His Marvelous Stories. An Example of His Work and Extravagance. Great Number of French and Latin Words. Importance of Final *e* in Middle English. Uninflected Forms. His Broad and Generous Views.
2. The Scottish Dialect. Its Origin Framed by Scots, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, and Normans. The Gaelic. Ossian. Introduction of French Idioms. Early Development of the Dialect.
3. John Barbour. His Bruce, the Earliest Epic in Our Language.
4. John Wicliffe. His Translation of the Bible. His Religious Views. Few of His Words Obsolete.

CHAPTER VII.—MIDDLE ENGLISH—Continued.—1350-1550. 153-182

1. Chaucer.
2. Langland.
3. Latin and Anglo-Saxon Influences.

CHAPTER VIII.—MIDDLE ENGLISH—Continued.—1350-1550 183-206

1. James I. and the Scotch Poets of this Period.
2. Sir Thomas More. His Utopia, Letters, and Writings.
3. Sir John Fortescue, Author of the First Treatise on the Laws of England.
4. Henry VIII., Erasmus, Cranmer, and the Writers of the Reformation.
5. The Influence of the Reformation and Renaissance Upon the Language.
6. Inflected and Uninflected Forms Discussed.
7. Middle English Analyzed and Described.

CHAPTER IX.—MODERN ENGLISH.—1550 to the Beginning of the XIX. Century. 207-233

1. Marlowe and the Dramatic Poets of the Renaissance. His Dr. Faustus, the Prototype of Goethe's, and his Richard III., of Shakespeare's. The First Writer in Blank Verse.
2. Lamb's Criticisms.
3. Ben Jonson. His Extraordinary Skill. Friendship for Shakespeare. His English Grammar.
4. Dramatic Writing. The Miracle Plays.
5. Customs of the Age Affected its Language.
6. The New English Introduced by John Lyly. His "Euphues," The First Prose Novel in Our Language. Description of the Book. Its Effect upon the Language of other Authors.
7. English Fiction. Thomas Nash. His Jack Wilton. Its Pure English Style.
8. Ballad Poetry.
9. English Takes its Present Form. Example Given. Some of the Changes. Correct Use of the Verb. William Lily's Grammar. Its Use Required by Order of the King.
10. The Derivations from Latin, and how the same were made.

CHAPTER X.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued. *Shakespeare* 234-274

1. His Education.
2. His Tragedies and Comedies.
3. His Sonnets.
4. His Language.
5. His Influence.
6. His Versification.
7. His Present Position.

CHAPTER XI.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued. 275-296

1. Bacon. His Style in English.
2. Raleigh. Founder of English in the New World.
3. Richard Hooker. Latin and Saxon Words.
4. Edmund Spenser. Use of Obsolete Words and Orthography.
5. Preachers of the 17th Century.
6. The Metaphysical Poets.
7. The Regular Growth of English.

CHAPTER XII.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued to the
Beginning of the XIX. Century 297-316

1. Milton's Use of the Saxon Element. 2. Compared with Homer.
3. Improved Appearance of English in Milton's Time.
4. His Proportion of Classical Terms.
5. Invocation to his Mother Tongue.
6. Vigorous English of his Prose.
7. His Appeal for Free Speech.
8. The Power of English.
9. Language of his Minor Poems.
10. Of "Paradise Lost"; his Obsolete Words and Practice of Inversion.
11. Subsequent Influence Upon Our Tongue.
12. His Use of Monosyllables and Familiar Words.
13. His Contemporaries.
14. No Personal Animosities in the Grand Epic.
15. His Versification; the Sound and Meaning of Words.
16. Theories of Language.
17. Imitative Power of English.
18. Sound and Sense in Milton's Poetry.

CHAPTER XIII.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued to the
Beginning of the XIX. Century 317-340

1. Authors of the Restoration.
2. Butler, Author of "Hudibras."
3. Dryden—Poet, Critic, and Dramatist.

CHAPTER XIV.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued 341-359

1. Court Writers of the Restoration.
 2. Richard Baxter.
 3. Izaak Walton.
 4. John Bunyan.
 5. John Locke.
 6. Jeremy Taylor.
 7. Bishop Hall, and Other Divines of the 17th Century.
- These Writers Connected by Critical and Biographical Remarks.

CHAPTER XV.—MODERN ENGLISH—Continued and Completed 360-384

1. The Writers of the 18th Century.
2. Their Use of English, with Comments and Criticisms Thereon.

CHAPTER XVI. 385-405

1. Present Rank and Condition of English Among the Living Languages of the World.
2. Its Diffusion, and the Prospect of Its General Use.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

CHAPTER I.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The Origin of Language. | 5. The Aryans. |
| 2. Our Mother Tongue. | 6. Indo-European Languages. |
| 3. The Saxons. | 7. Saxon Emigration from Asia. |
| 4. Early English. | 8. Saxon Poems. |

THE object of language is to express the thoughts of the mind, and as all thought is but the reflection of the soul we can easily understand that when language was first used the expressions were of a very simple and purely symbolic character, that is to say, that the sign of the thing intended to be expressed was a sound of some kind, and that this sound was adapted to the purpose of showing the meaning by a similarity to the thing itself. Thus when a sound of a falling tree was heard it would naturally excite a sense of the same kind of sound in the mind, and the word to express that idea would be a loud cry of wonder. The word would partake of this sensation and express the idea of surprise. But when the same thing occurred repeatedly there would be a great many sounds and a great many sensations; when the number of these sensations in-

creased to such extent as to puzzle the mind, it would gradually form a common symbol to express them all. Thus the sound of a falling tree would become a common word to express a general idea, and the language would receive it into its vocabulary as a permanent denizen.

Whether the word expresses the sound, is altogether a different matter. That many words express both sense and sound is undoubtedly the fact, but if the sound and the sense concur in the same word it would be very difficult to distinguish the origin of this phenomenon, for the reason that all sound has some sense, and there is no word that has not a sound; therefore, when we speak of sound and sense concurring in the same word or words, we do not mean to say that all sound is sense, or that every word has a corresponding sound. All we desire to affirm is that sense and sound are not so closely related as to invariably accompany each other, and even in the origin of language it would be difficult to understand how they could occur together, since no two sounds are just alike, and no two words have precisely the same meaning. We are not inclined to adopt the extreme views of Max Müller on this subject, who seems to think that because the sound of a word conveys no idea whatever, yet the meaning thereof is to be wholly derived from its etymological antecedents. If this be so, then the origin of words can only be traced back to a very limited period, for the history of language is buried in centuries of darkness long before its record began. The only sure way to arrive at etymological certainty is to trace the history of a word or words to as remote a period as possible, and

then there springs up before us another period of unknown duration, that stretches into the impenetrable recesses of a world without any remains of its literature, and whose language has perished in the gloom of ages.

When, therefore, we find a word that has no derivation in the ancient tongues and none in those that have been preserved, we can only guess at its etymology, and pass it over to that immense class that are like many families who have no pedigree and no escutcheon to their name, but have yet achieved an acknowledged place in society, and are everywhere received for their own merit and respectability.

We now come to the origin of language among the civilized races of mankind; and here we find a record more or less distinct, more or less reliable, but still not of such distinctness as would authorize us to pronounce oracularly upon the forms of spoken speech among the common people, for there are always vulgar dialects contemporaneous with the language of polished society. We are, therefore, still left to conjecture as to the origin of words, whether they commenced with the common people, or with those who were cultivated. When the language of a people becomes refined, the uneducated masses are not in a condition to adopt the improvements of those who are more cultivated. The original forms of the idiom are not allowed to blemish the urbane dialect of the learned. The modest speech that was formerly alone spoken falls into neglect, and literature admits only such ancient forms as respond to some necessity of speech. These parvenu words will by and by be admitted to keep company with the best, and will

be presented with passports to the standard lexicon of the language.

The etymology of words is so connected with considerations of this kind that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact meaning of words according to the theory of Mr. Müller. But when we come to the more modern languages we have less trouble to understand them. The English language, for instance, is of modern growth, and can be traced back to its Anglo-Saxon cradle with comparative ease. When the first book was written is a matter of historical certainty. When the first poem was composed, and the first proclamation promulgated, are all matters of such indisputable certainty that we refer to them as facts established by their own existence and by the evidence of contemporary writers. But when we come to trace the words that entered into the texture of the language, we find ourselves lost in the depths of Northern tongues that have long ceased to be spoken in those very regions. We are not a people of one language, but of many. The different ingredients of our tongue come from all parts of the globe, and assemble in our vocabulary as in a favored land that invites and receives all who come, bringing with them the credentials of their usefulness or beauty. We naturalize them upon their proof of good character and loyalty to their new home, and when they become fully endorsed by the people, or by our scholars, they take a place in our literature and are seated at our table, with all the rights and privileges of true-born citizens. We are not afraid of debasing our mother tongue by this admixture, for if they are found unfitted for our use or alien to our idiom,

we soon drop them into oblivion, and they disappear like the unwelcome stranger who finds he is out of place and retires without the formality of leave-taking.

We come next to consider the origin of our language as a distinct form of speech. In the first place we notice the growth of its vocabulary. Here we find many words of Scandinavian origin, while those from the Germanic tribes are still more numerous. The Saxon predominates them all, and is the true basis of the English to this day. We find Saxon words in all the forms of our literature, in our books and periodicals, in our magazines and histories, in our poems and novels, in our books of theology and metaphysics, in our laws and in our sermons. The great body of speech in ordinary conversation is Saxon, as is also the speech of the masses. We speak in Saxon, we write in Saxon, we pray in Saxon, and we love in its tender and emotional dialect. Our deeds, our covenants, and our agreements, our public records, our parliamentary and congressional debates, our instructions to the servant in the household, and our appeals to those in the highest places of honor or trust are in the language of the old Saxon tribes, that a thousand years ago, on the flat and swampy lands of the Scheldt and the sea, on the mud and mire of the low lands, and upon the indented bays of the coast, lived and struggled with the elements and bore their forages and ravages to all the neighboring shores.

We do not speak it as they spoke it. The knowledge of the sounds given to words is lost, but we may be sure that those fierce barbarians uttered them amidst the storm that beat upon their homes or tossed their frail

barks at sea, with an energy and force far excelling the loudest and strongest voice of our modern eloquence. They spoke to nature in its wildest moods. They spoke to men of iron temper and hardy endurance, to weather-beaten and fearless companions, to the winds and the waves, where nothing weak could live, or speak, or act. Accustomed from their earliest infancy to feats of strength and agility, to long voyages by river and on the sea, they acquired habits of endurance and self-control that never forsook them. They spoke to each other when the storm was loudest, when the heavens were blackest, and when all nature was hostile to their going forward, yet they feared nothing, and heard the roar of the tempest only to bid it defiance. All their energies were directed to the struggle for existence. The land was barren, the streams were lifeless; the sea was the only element that promised them the means of living, and their tiny barks were fearlessly launched upon the waves and given to the winds. There was scarcely any other mode of existence. The sea was their friend, their home. It furnished them with food; it carried them on their far off voyages for pillage, and bore them back when laden with the spoils of war. Their mythology was of a character to suit their temper. The wolf was the symbol of the wind. The moon was the great lamp hung up in the sky that they might see their way in the darkness, and the sun was the luminary that rose in the east, pointing them to the land of their ancestry, and they worshiped it as the father of all things; and when the weather was calm, and the winds and waves were still, they repaired to their tents and returned thanks for the blessed light, and the glorious firmament

through which the god of day drove his golden chariot. They worshiped the god of thunder, for he spoke to them in the loudest peals of his wrath; and were always ready to bow the knee to Odin, who rode through the air on his milk-white steed, with clang of hoof and horn, accompanied by a body of disembodied spirits.

They had many religious rites, such as the burning of the yule-log, a ceremony still observed on the night of the Holy Nativity. They sacrificed a certain number of their prisoners to appease the god of war, and drank their blood in the skulls of their victims. The orgies in the Valhalla were the recompense of the brave who fell in battle, and it was lighted with the brightness of glittering swords and shining shields.

The men were brave, and the women were held in high esteem, and were often permitted to share the dangers of their husbands. The dreams of the Scalds and the songs of the Eddas were related by the fireside or during the long watches of the night at sea. There were no exaggerations of the poets and no exploits of their fabled heroes and demi-gods that they did not receive into their faith.

Such a people would naturally acquire strong modes of expression, words of deep meaning suitable for their wild existence. They would be expressive in the briefest manner of the feelings and the passions. Not only were they fierce and fearless, but many softer qualities mingled in their nature. Domestic life was sacred, and its violator punished with death. The women were devoted to their husbands and families, and in the absence of the former they cultivated the fields, fed the cattle, and held sway over the household with the same

parental authority as he would have done if present.

We speak of our mother tongue as something sacred. It is the language in which we first spoke in childhood. Its accents fell upon our ears when a mother caressed us in infancy, and it was the pride of our earliest efforts to utter its sounds. It spoke to us of home, of kindred, of the loved ones who cheered our youthful hours with stories and songs of love. At the cradle its lullabies hushed us into repose and awoke us with gentle words and soothing accents, and its tender expressions fell upon the heart like the morning beams upon the landscape. All our earlier thoughts were spoken, all our earlier trials were related in the tongue our mother used when she held us to her breast. There is no event more vivid in our memory than our first lisping, than our first cries of delight in its tones of infant joy. Nor do we forget the pleasure of the moments when we first understood how to express our meaning by its words. We are not yet fully conscious of its intrinsic worth, for it is of all spoken tongues the one best adapted for the general use of mankind, by the simplicity of its grammar and the great variety of its terms. We are often struck by the softness of its words. The sweet and sacred ones of love, hope, smile, joy, and laughter, and all the tender phrases of kindred and home are familiar to us from childhood, and yet never lose their power over our affections nor become hackneyed and worn out by use. Its beauty is also seen in the great number of its words of endearment, such as *dear*, *lovely*, *charming*, *adorable*, *caress*, *fond*, *affectionate*, and hundreds of others that speak to our hearts and waken emotions that never cease to delight us, and that never pall upon

the heart, however constant their use. We do not recall a word so precious as that of *home*. How simple, and yet it implies all the domestic ties of life, and points to the one spot on earth where our affections are always true and where love gains its hopes and reaps its golden dreams. When we ask for any friendly expression, how wonderfully it furnishes the choicest selection of amicable terms. Our friend is our *playmate*, our *schoolfellow*, our *neighbor*, our *associate*, our *chum*, our *companion*, and we owe him *brotherly love*, *kindness*, *charity*, *assistance*, and *devotion*. All the sweet terms of household love, all the grand ones of the soul's greatest passion, are simple, and nearly all of Saxon origin. The man who can reason without using the Saxon derivatives, and the poet who can sing without them in his verse are unknown, and while the Latin and French are both useful and ornamental, yet the great mass of ordinary conversation, oratory, poetry, and literature are in its crisp and syllabic remains.

In the first place, the great want is a knowledge of early English. The reason that so little is known on this interesting subject, is the need of well prepared reprints, with proper explanatory notes and glossaries. This work has been undertaken by various societies in Great Britain, especially by the Early English Text Society, and many volumes have been published with learned notes and glossaries. But the circulation is limited, and the works are not generally accessible to the public. They are for sale like other books by the publisher, but for some reason they do not get into the hands of the people. The original forms and dialects are not easily understood and have to be studied like

books in a foreign or dead language, and it really cannot be expected that the mass of readers will take the pains necessary to know them. These considerations will continue to operate in the future, but we hope not to the same extent as at present. A simpler mode of presenting the classics of early English to attention is a matter of sincere desire, and would be a great help to those who wish to understand them, but have not the time nor the means necessary for such a pursuit. We have endeavored to supply this want to such extent as is consistent with the general plan of our undertaking, by calling attention to early authors and giving a few specimens from their works, and such brief biographical sketches as will enlighten the mind in regard to these pioneers in our language and literature.

When we consider the object of all language, we can better understand the bearing of any particular one. If, for instance, we understood the dialect spoken by the Esquimaux, we could understand the one spoken by the inhabitants of Greenland, and if we could understand the language of the Russian people, we could understand the one spoken by the Poles and the Laplanders, for the reason that all these tongues are derived from the original Tartar or Ivan form of speech, that prevailed in Northern Asia thousands of years before the Christian era.

It is a received opinion among philologists that owing to its isolated position on the southeastern shores of the Baltic, where it was least exposed to the inroads of war or immigration, Lithuania has preserved the original terms of the Aryan languages with greater purity than any other portion of Europe, and it is said to agree

in many verbal and grammatical forms with the Sanskrit more than any other dialect. Perhaps it is the best exponent we have of the original Aryan. It has happened elsewhere that a people isolated by themselves can preserve the forms of speech much better than others, and in that case it can be referred to for the purpose of identifying the stock from which they descended. Where the same language is spoken by different nations there is a strong presumption of a common origin. These affinities in the languages of Europe have been carefully studied until it has been established beyond any reasonable doubt that they have all been derived from the same lineage. Now, according to the theory of the German philologists, broached about fifty or sixty years ago, a race of people are assumed to have occupied the central portions of Asia; to have gradually wandered from their native seats to the western portions of that continent, and finally to have crossed the Euphrates into the eastern region of Europe, and then dispersing in every direction left traces of their speech wherever they went. They are generally known by the conventional name of Aryans, and the designation Indo-European has been applied to all the tongues and dialects they poured out upon the people they visited or subdued.

The etymologists have investigated with profound learning the similarities that associate our modern dialects with each other, and have examined not only the grammatical forms but the habits and domestic life of these ancient races, and determined the kind and extent of their civilization and government. This extraordinary result has been wrought out by comparing the

words in one language with those in another and showing a similarity in their form and meaning. Thus, for instance, the word, *father*, is nearly the same in all the Aryan dialects, the variations being only such as might be expected in passing from one people to another. So all the words relating to family, such as *brother*, *sister*, *husband*, *mother*, *daughter*, etc., bear a close resemblance to each other in the Germanic forms, as well as in those of Latin origin, to say nothing of the Sanskrit, the Persian and the Zend, showing that there must have been a common origin of words in different languages that are the same, or nearly the same, in form and meaning in them all. Several lists of these words have been prepared, the last being that of Max Müller, containing several hundred, which all the Aryan languages have in common, and which he divides into fifteen classes according to their subjects.

Thus by a species of inductive reasoning, the fact has been established that such a great similarity of innumerable words could only have descended from the same original, and exhibits the sweeping and overwhelming destinies that roll out of the ceaseless flow of human speech.

We must now give some account of the Anglo-Saxon, from which our own tongue is derived, and which, like the other Indo-European languages, has a large infusion of Aryan words in its vocabulary. Who gave an Aryan dialect to the Saxon and the Scandinavian, is becoming a hotly contested question; but whatever may be thought of that subject, it is satisfactorily established that a people speaking the Aryan language gave Gothic to the North and Sanskrit to the East, thus bringing into

relationship at some remote period the blue-eyed Saxon and the dark-skinned Hindoo, either by the affinities of blood or language. The correctness of the theory that they came from Asia has been severely called in question and ably examined by those well qualified for the office. Mr. Crawfurt first, and Canon Taylor at a later period, hold that the Aryans were an European people ; while Prof. Huxley, who has examined the question with his usual skill and learning, thinks they came from the confines of the two continents, and perhaps as far east as the Caspian Sea, and from the banks of the neighboring rivers.

It may, however, be very safely asserted that the great current of belief among scholars, and sustained by the most prominent names in philology, has been that the stream of Aryan speech came along with those sweeping eruptions from the East, that carried not only language into Europe but many things besides. That, indeed, Asia was not only the cradle of the Aryans, but the great storehouse from which Europe received its arts, its religion, and its Christianity. The tide has generally been from the same quarter. But I do not enter upon this disputed question. Perhaps there is not yet sufficient material upon which to justify a final conclusion. The facts and considerations collected by Max Müller in his "Home of the Aryans," offer the strongest argument that has yet appeared for the hypothesis that somewhere in Asia was the place of their habitat, and the starting point of their separation. Whatever we may think of his facts or his reasoning, they establish beyond all doubt an Aryan speech and an Aryan people ; but that they ever visited the North

is a supposition sustained only by the Aryan type of its language. It is not an historical probability that an Asiatic people would settle upon the low, flat lands and muddy plains of a country, such as Holland and Jutland must have been in those prehistoric times. The country to which they would have come bore no resemblance to the Caucasian scenery which they are supposed to have abandoned. Its climate was cold and humid, the aspects of nature had no points of grandeur, no sweet valleys, no gentle slopes, no rugged peaks, no overhanging crags, no rushing torrents, no sparkling brooks, no lofty mountains, and no motionless streams. There, all nature was seen in beautiful variety, or in solemn and peerless sublimity. But in their new homes all this was reversed. The land was flat, low, and marshy. The streams stagnated in their beds, the clouds hung over the land and the sea like a leaden sheet loaded with moisture and heavy with rain. The whole aspect of nature was changed. The frowning crag just ready to topple over, the grandeur of the mountain, and the beauty of the valley, the rushing torrent, and the sweet music of the streamlet were no longer among the objects familiar to their senses, and the humble flight of the sea bird was but a feeble image of the towering grandeur of the eagle. Indeed, the circumstances that would have attended such a migration of a whole people, are so extraordinary and inexplicable as to throw discredit upon the theory it is supposed to sustain.

We are at a loss to understand how the inhabitants in that region lived except by plunder or warfare; and such indeed was their mode of existence. We can

scarcely conceive of anything more wild and rugged than their kind of life. The sea was their principal element. On the crest of a wave or on the top of a great mound of seaweed or shells, they were equally at home. The stars were their guide, and the sun the only object of terror that struck them with dismay, when, descending in the evening, it burnished the sky with spots of molten fire, and spread a vast sheet of flame upon the water. They thought that Woden was enraged and displayed his wrath in the burning heavens. And yet when the morning arose in the east, they went into their tents or upon the decks of their vessels and worshiped the sun as the brightest thing in the universe, and invoked the god of light to show them the unseen mysteries of his power. They worshiped at the shrine of Thor, the god of war, that he might give them victory and endow them with the means of conquering their enemies and feasting upon their cattle. The most stormy weather found them upon the ocean, and the wildest commotion of the waves filled their souls with defiance and scorn. The angry waters had no terrors, and the loudest hurricanes no trepidation for them. The gloom of night and the sombre look of the sky were great and awe inspiring objects of fear, and they shook and trembled at the voice of thunder as the mutterings of the gods and the angry sound of their voices. They were struck with wonder at the appearance of a comet, and thought it the form of a new world thrown upon the sky, to wander there till the gods were ready to supply it with a place of permanent repose like the other stars in the firmament. There was no room in their heaven for any but those who had died in battle

or were distinguished for valor. The glory of arms and the excitement of strife were the great inducements of life, and the songs of the Scalds and the poems of the Eddas were the natural outgrowth of this warlike spirit. The Brunanburgh war song, the Snorro metres, and the exploits of Beowulf, the Dane, are all of this character, and serve to illustrate the warlike habits of these children of the Arctic.

In the poem of Beowulf there is a description of a fight between the hero of the piece and a being of mysterious birth, belonging to the ancient Jutes, a race of unnatural monsters who lived on the blood of their victims. One of these fiendish creatures had a den near the Court of the good King Hrothgar, of Denmark. This creature was in the habit of visiting the hall in the palace where the King's warriors feasted upon the meats of the royal table and drank from the mead cup, till, overpowered, they lay down upon the couches for repose. When all were wrapped in slumber, the vindictive murderer would break in upon the sleepers, and, seizing them, with his immense strength crushing their bones like the dry stalks in the harvest, carry their bodies away to his den to feast upon their blood. The King saw his best and most valiant soldiers taken from him, one after the other, and he was broken down with grief, for none of his chiefs could stand before the Grendel. Beowulf, a noble Goth, who was related to the house of the ancient Hrothgar, hearing these tidings, repaired to the Danish court and offered, single handed and alone, to meet the Grendel and put him to death. He accordingly sleeps in the "mead hall," and the Grendel, coming as usual for his prey, spies the youth-

ful Goth upon his couch and is about to seize him, when suddenly the latter rises up and confronts the monster. The keen weapon of the Goth finds a vulnerable spot in the shoulder of the Grendel, and working it there, he inflicts a fatal wound. The monster retires to his den to die, and Beowulf wrenches an arm and a hand from his body as a trophy of his victory.

Of course there is great rejoicing, and an immoderate deal of feasting and speech making over the result, not forgetting the mead cup.

But the war is soon renewed by the mother of the Grendel, who is of the same wicked progeny. To revenge the death she visits the feasting hall, but not being so powerful as her son, the warriors prove more than a match for her, though she succeeds in carrying off one of their number. She dwells in a cave that is washed by the waves of the sea, with other unearthly creatures like herself. Hither Beowulf repairs, armed for another combat, in which he is also victorious, but receives a fatal wound, and is carried to the King's palace, where he dies.

In the story of "The Traveller," we are told of a race of beings in one of the countries he visited, where the inhabitants wore two mantles, one before and the other behind, so that they might appear to an enemy to be two persons, and so doubly formidable.

The Snorro metres is a collection of the heroic and religious tales and traditions of the olden time that prevailed among the Northern races, and serve to give us an idea of the old Saxon forms and mythological dreams. But the most celebrated of them all is probably the story

of the dragon and the mighty King of the Goths, who slew it by a single blow from his arm.

Feats of superhuman strength displayed in the delivery of kingdoms from the ravages of wicked dragons and other vindictive creatures, that destroy whole districts and devour women and children for food, are among the exploits of these mighty warriors; and show us that the authors of Scaldic literature sang their fabulous tales to foster the wild spirit of adventure in their people, and to animate them to acts of stupendous endurance and fortitude.

The Goths and other neighboring tribes were ruled and led by their Kings; but the Saxons had no Kings. Their leaders were elected, and had only such powers conferred upon them as their followers designated. Neither Hengist nor Ella had been Kings in Germany. All laws were enacted in their Witenagemots, as their Parliaments were called, and all the Saxon laws extant were enacted in similar assemblies after their settlement in Britain.

No doubt exists as to the antiquity of the primitive forms of old Saxon, as its sources are so remote as to defy speculation. It must have arisen out of the fusion of the Saxon and other Gothic and, perhaps, Celtic tribes among themselves upon the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea, and it is not a matter of surprise that, as they were continually at war, and mixing up with each other, their language should undergo constant change, so that what were its forms till it preponderated in the Island of Britain, it is now almost impossible to ascertain. But we are informed that in all the forms of Anglo-Saxon are to be found traces of the vari-

ous dialects which combined to produce it. The Celtic and the Latin, the tongues spoken by the Goth, the Dane, the Scandinavian, with many a tribe besides from Lower Germany, who joined the Saxon fleets in their quest of the British Island, assert themselves in the Anglo-Saxon, and undoubtedly these different nations could recognize many of its words, without being able to trace the derivation of its other ingredients.

Many of our customs are of Saxon origin. The days of the week are named after their deities, and the objects of their adoration are preserved in the calendar of the church. Easter Sunday and Easter holidays come from Eastr, the goddess of the household, who presided over marriage and was the patron of the domestic virtues. It was she who aided women in childbirth, and sat with the family in the hours of leisure and enjoyment. All the forms of ancient mythology are indeed but the expression of something connected with human life. — One of their songs, for instance, relates that the traveller came to a people who worshiped the rising moon, for the reason that it lighted their way when they went on their midnight forays; and he mentions another race who worshiped the north star because it pointed them out the course to steer their vessels when there was no other means to guide them. So in the history of Beowulf, the hero of the piece rejoices that the firmament above his head is so full of stars that shine out in the darkness, and give him an opportunity of attacking his enemies when least expected. In the Eddas of Snorro, the poet exults in the thought that when the world is drowned in sleep, he can sing the glory of the past by the light of the shining

stars above and by the clear rays of the moon. So through all the old Saxon poetry we find that natural objects are deified because of some useful benefit they confer upon man. In the great poem of the first writer in early English, Layamon, we find many examples of this kind. He speaks of the sun, the moon, and the stars as bright luminaries shining for the good and use of man, and keeping him in a world of light and beauty, for else the night would swallow up all things and darkness would cover the land and the sea with a pall as black as Erebus. So in the later production by Langland called "Piers, the Plowman," we have many such examples. The author supposes himself to have fallen asleep, and while in that condition to have had a vision, in which the whole of the poem is made to consist; but he relates many things that occurred in daily life, as, for instance, how the monks of that day lived in idleness and ease, and led a dissolute life of pleasure and ignorance. This was not necessary to his purpose, but he introduces it apparently as the means of stating that when the people went to church they looked at the priest as the man most fitted to instruct them in holy things, but found on the contrary that all the value of religion consisted in giving alms and saying their prayers. But this was not a place for either, and they must go to their homes and ask God to forgive their sins, and if they could not do this, then they must look up to the heavens for light and knowledge. The many forms of mythology that crept into early English are also visible in the frequent allusions made by still another and greater poet than them all, our own peerless Chaucer, who in recounting the story of "The Knight," makes men-

tion of a custom among the people of some country he had visited, of looking upon the apple tree with veneration bordering upon idolatry because it furnished them with the means of making cider, and consequently of a drink that produced intoxication. Indeed, we find in all the early forms of our literature references of this kind, and many of them still flourish in modern productions.

CHAPTER II.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The Saxons in Britain. | 4. Alfred the Great. |
| 2. The Anglo-Saxons. | 5. The Goths and Danes. |
| 3. Cædmon, the Poet. | 6. Anglo-Saxon the Basis of English. |

THE most interesting period in the early history of England is its settlement by the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles. It commenced about the year 449, and continued under various leaders for more than a century. Their first appearance was a welcome one. The Celtic inhabitants had been harrassed and driven to despair by the incursions of the Picts and Scots, who occupied the northern part of the island. They found the Celts enfeebled by Roman civilization and luxury. A nation that had been so long subject to Roman sway could scarcely be expected to maintain themselves against these repeated attacks from the Northern hordes, whose only object was plunder, and who, when they had obtained all the booty they could carry away, retired to their native fastnesses, where pursuit was impossible; and there they would remain till quiet was restored, when sudden as the swoop of a whirlwind from Ben-Lomond, they would again pour down upon the disorganized communities with greater slaughter and havoc than before. The Celts sent first to Rome for assistance, and twice legions were forwarded who drove the barbarians within the Grampian Range. But these were finally withdrawn, never to return, for

they were needed to protect the city of Romulus from the mighty Hun, Attila, who was ready to enter its gates.

The inroads from the North were renewed, and the Celts, unable to protect themselves, called in the Saxon fleets that were then hovering upon the coast on a predatory excursion of their own. The Saxons responded to this invitation with alacrity, and landed at the island of Thanet, on the coast of Kent, and then proceeded at once to a spot which is memorable in English history, called the town of Canterbury, where they erected the standard of Hengist and Horsa, losing no time in notifying the Celtic chiefs of their arrival. The Saxons soon drove the marauders across the borders; and then, seeing the country they had come to defend had a fertile soil, a soft, mild climate, and was, altogether, a pleasant and desirable land to possess, they turned their arms against their allies, to vanquish their friends as they had their foes.

When the intelligence reached the people of the low German lands that the rich kingdom of Britain was invaded by their neighbors, they swarmed across the narrow sea in great numbers, and every battle was followed by throngs of new comers. After a terrible and bloody contest, that continued for over a century, the Celtic people grew weaker and weaker, and were finally driven into the remote parts of the island, where their descendants are still to be found. Britain changed its nationality and became Saxon instead of Celtic.

This is perhaps one of the most stupendous convulsions that ever overtook a civilized people. The Celts had flourished for four centuries as a Roman province,

and were Christianized and cultivated. Their scholars and poets were received at Rome, and many of their literary remains have reached this day. That this people should have been nearly effaced out of existence and expelled from their homes by a band of barbarian corsairs, is one of those strange events that history mentions with profound sorrow, but still rejoices that a new nation has sprung up to take their place for the benefit of mankind at large. Similar changes were witnessed on the continent, where the Goths, a kindred race with the Saxons, had pillaged all the civilized communities, destroying their arts and learning, but in their places founded kingdoms that have filled the world with their historic fame and grandeur. So these poor Saxon freebooters, after committing every atrocity upon the native inhabitants of the island, created a nationality that has surpassed them all in the greatness of its influence and the wide extended empire of its language.

The Northern tribes that joined the Saxons were of the same general stock, and passed under the same general name, and all spoke the same language, but each tribe had, undoubtedly, its own peculiar forms and idioms, and when they were brought together in the conquest of the British Island there arose a strange intermixture of oral communication. It was a compound of all the idioms spoken by the warlike invaders, and thus gave birth to one that acquired the name of Anglo-Saxon. This new form of speech has great interest for the English philologist, since it has exercised the most important influence upon the language we now use. Here we find the first rudiments of English, the first words of its vocabulary, and the greatest resource of its strength and

lucidity. There is no doubt about the origin of English. It was cradled in Anglo-Saxon and reared by those who were familiar with no other dialect.

It is not my intention to consider any language but our own, yet I cannot help observing the great difference between its source and that of the tongues of contemporary nations. The latter, as a general rule, were supplied by the blending of the Latin and the rustic speech of the unlettered people. The Teutonic nations, on the contrary, derived their dialects from the Germanic races, which were spoken by all alike. The same words were heard in the palace and the hut, and all had a common love for their native tongue as the link which bound all classes together. The high born and the low spoke the same words, uttered the same sounds, understood each other, and no one was heard who did not speak the same dialect. This remarkable circumstance has not escaped observation, for it has often been remarked that the languages of the low German countries are more nearly alike today than those in other parts of Europe. This may explain the difference between the Latin-based languages and those of Teutonic origin. In the latter we find many of the words precisely the same in them all, and are still used by all classes of the people; but in the former the rustic speech is quite different from that which prevails in polite society. We have here a reason why the Anglo-Saxon element in English is still spoken by the whole of the people. Indeed, its forms seem incapable of corruption, from the fact that they are generally so simple that they can neither be improved by change, nor degraded by any variation of their meaning. There is a charm in such words as *love, hope, tear,*

smile, joy, laughter, and home, together with all the tender phrases of kindred and domestic life. The sensible objects of nature and the practical things in human affairs are Anglo-Saxon. It furnishes the poet and the orator with terms of heavenly fire or passionate appeal.

Several generations, however, passed away before we can trace the progress of Saxon letters or literature. It was a period of constant war among the different kingdoms of the Heptarchy, until Egbert, the father of Alfred the Great, subdued them all and became sole monarch of the whole country. Meanwhile the Anglo-Saxon had made great progress in its structure and grammar. Its verbs were regularly conjugated; its nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and articles were all declined with an extraordinary degree of perplexity. There were four declensions for nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and even the article was declined with the strangest vagaries of inflexion.

The historians Gildas (516-570) and Bede (673-735) employed Latin, which was at that period the only language for circulation among the learned of all nations, and other writers followed their example. It was only in the mists and gloom of the 7th century (680) that a wonderful poet arose to sing his numbers in the rugged speech of his mother tongue. Bede's description of how Cædmon began to sing was translated by Alfred himself into Saxon. I find a literal interlineary English version in Note II to Thomas Percy's "Essay on the Ancient Minstrels":

"He (Cædmon) never no ceasings nor idle songs compose he might, but lo! only those things which to (piety) religion belong, and his then pious tongue became to sing. He was a man in worldly state set to the time in which he was of an advanced age,

and he never sang any song learned. And he therefore, oft in an entertainment when there was for merriment's sake, adjudged that they all should through their turns by harp sing, when he saw the harp him approach then arose he for shame from the supper and home went to his house."

When Cædmon's genius was first developed he had probably attained the period of middle life, and occupied the humble position of herdsman at Whitby Abbey, a structure that reared its massive walls upon the rocky coast of Northumbria, and withstood the drenching tides of the German Ocean. An extraordinary woman, of royal lineage and great erudition, named Hilda, held the position of Abbess, and she had made the place famous by her good deeds, having also raised it to eminence as a seat of learning and scholarship. One evening Cædmon was feasting with his companions and the song and cup went round, but he knew so little of music or poetry that when his turn came he left the board and retired to the stable where he had charge of the cattle that night. Tradition tells the story, that, overcome with vexation at his ignorance, he lay down sleeping on his straw pillow, when he was warned by a heavenly vision to sing. "I cannot sing," replied Cædmon, "for this cause have I left the feast." The vision answered him, "However that may be, you shall sing to me." "What shall I sing?" inquired the sleeper. "The beginning of created things," replied the same voice as before. Then the sacred fire kindled in his soul, and he began to sing what had never been written by any one, in words that will probably never pass away. The venerable Bede records these particulars, and has carefully transmitted the inspired lines of

Cædmon's midnight hymn, substantially in the following language, which I take from Mill's translation :

Now we shall praise
the guardian of heaven,
the might of the creator,
and his council,
the glory, father of men
how he of all wonders,
the eternal lord,
framed the beginning.
He first created
for the children of men
heaven as a roof,
the holy creator
then the world
the guardian of mankind,
the eternal lord,
produced afterward,
the earth for men,
the Almighty master.

When he awoke his heart trembled with a new mystery. He ran to the Abbey, where he found Hilda, together with some of the learned men from the adjacent monastery; he told his story and repeated his dream. The lines returned to him without an effort, and when he concluded reciting the verses they were awed into silence and wonder. At last their excitement burst forth in exclamations that he had received the gift of song from heaven. But they did not know all. Some scriptural stories were read and explained to him in his own Anglo-Saxon, which he was required to turn into verses. He could read nothing, he could write nothing. The poem was formed in his mind, he knew not how.

On the following morning he stood again in the Abbey-Hall, with verses far superior in beauty and majesty to anything they had ever heard, upon the Bible passages they had read in his hearing. From that forth he continued to produce poems concerning the fall of man, and the war of the angels in heaven. At least a paraphrase of several portions of the Old Testament, still preserved in a manuscript in the British Museum, is ascribed to him, on what appears to be quite satisfactory authority, by Franciscus Junius, in an edition of the work that he published at Amsterdam in 1655. The same opinion is expressed by Mr. W. D. Conybeare, in his edition of his brother's work on Anglo-Saxon poetry. The paraphrase of Cædmon, notwithstanding its irregular versification and want of form, displays many passages in the highest flight of imagination. The harmony and beauty of rhymes were then unknown, and a poem or song derived its points of consonance from alliteration, or the repetition of the same letter in words at short intervals. Each line consisted of two feet, as a general rule, which made four syllables, and sometimes five, when one of the feet was a dactyl. The alliteral letter occurred three times, twice in the first and once in the second line of every distich, thus—

*Glad ofer Grundas
Godes candel beorht.*

(Glides over the earth God's candle bright.) Mr. Conybeare expresses the opinion that the poetical ornament of rhyme was probably introduced by the Danish poets in the reign of Canute (1015-1035), and that author gives an example of a rhyming poem, that also retains

alliteration, as the only instance which is still extant of a regular imitation of that metre in Saxon. The elegance of rhymes was, however, not much practiced until the beginning of the 16th century, and even then both metres were sometimes blended in the same couplet. Their concurrent use must have fettered the free expression of thought and weighed upon the imagination. Indeed, the soul and passion of the poem must have escaped through the double artifice. But Cædmon gave an epical power to his descriptions that did not depend for its effect upon the jingle of his lines or the mere form of his versification. In an age of animalism he idealized the spiritual contemplations of the mind, and gave to man's nature higher thoughts than the base impulses he beheld in the life of those around him.

Whence came this inspiration of the unlettered peasant? Was it simply the outburst of Saxon genius in its new conditions, looking down upon the dismantled shrines of the old heathen worship, and replacing them with a new melody instead of the metrical fragments which had been kept alive by recitation from the old barbarism, and which were only rife with tales of bloodshed and plunder. That old oral poetry was still the song of the feast and the music of the fireside, and no doubt perpetuated the wild and mystic temper of a vanished age.

Genius most always takes us by surprise, and we can scarcely ever understand its secret or its work. In the region where Cædmon lived he may have unconsciously imbibed a diviner sympathy than his rude neighbors could understand, or even himself. The weather-beaten shores from which he beheld the sun begin to fleck the

East with purple hues, the azure vault of day, the golden sunset in the distance, and the whispering hours of night, were but foregleams of the invisible and the impalpable to one who was born a poet. The veil which separates the spiritual world from the natural to the eye of sense is thicker and more solid than the granite rock ; but to the poetic sight it is thinner than the invisible ether in which our planet floats through its orbit. Cædmon was reared amid a scenery to which the wreathings of mountain mists and the roar of stormy elements across the sea gave movement and grandeur. The play of land and water, the beauty of the visible heavens, the perfumed and golden light of the morning, were the imagery pictured upon his mind. The simple faith of the period kept up the old legends about spiritual presence in the green shades, and voices in soft west winds ; and no doubt his memory overflowed with the tales of heavenly charms, and spells, and phantoms, that were told round the hearthstone of the lowly and the humble. The antique legend of his vision raises human thought into the mystery of the miraculous. He depicts the anger and dismay of Satan, the plotter of all the crimes in heaven, and exalts with the angels and spirits who adore the "Lord of Hosts," as if he had obtained the secret of invisible realities and was already in unison with the eternal life which he describes.

Cædmon sung his sacred hymns in the vernacular, and in less than one hundred and fifty years afterwards Alfred the Great paid great attention to its cultivation. It had assumed a form fit for literary composition, and it was in this flourishing condition when the Danes renewed their predatory incursions upon the coast and

carried their ravages into the interior. They succeeded in driving Alfred into concealment (848), but emerging from his retreat, he defeated the Danes with immense slaughter, taking a great many prisoners. He stipulated with them that they should settle permanently in Northumbria. In their former incursions they had pillaged and sacked that territory repeatedly, leaving standing no habitation however humble, no structure however sacred. It was utterly depopulated—a wide-spread desert of ruin and desolation. He reasoned correctly that as there was no plunder there for them to live upon, they would be obliged to create by industry the means of subsistence. Some of them, unrestrained by their promise, took to the sea and resumed their predatory life; but by far the greater number took to the soil, and their children became incorporated with the common English people, and ultimately grew to be the preponderating element in that region. This fact is illustrated by the large infusion of Danish words and idioms throughout the various dialects of the North, and an acute writer has stated that it would be easy for even a superficial observer to come to the conclusion that the common speech is mainly and essentially Danish in its whole texture. The peasantry and common people, perhaps, little suspect that many of their most characteristic idioms came originally from the lips of the old Scandinavian vikings, who brought them into the district a thousand years ago.

Alfred's work, however, did not stop here. His influence upon the literature of his country was admirable. The Danes had destroyed the monasteries and the books and libraries they contained. All places of

learning had been swept by the wing of destruction, and of teaching there had been none for years. Alfred declared that when he took the kingdom, very few south of the Humber, and fewer still beyond it, could understand their prayers in English. He called to his court the most learned men from different parts of the Continent, to assist him in the work of instruction; and required that all the monasteries should become schools for educating his subjects. There was a hall of instruction in the royal palace, where he taught the young nobles himself.

Translations of books from the Latin into the vernacular were made for the information of the common people. The Gospels were rendered into Anglo-Saxon, as were also the histories of Bede and several other books in history, geography, moral philosophy, and religion. Especially the books and verses of Boethius, "the last man of genius produced by ancient Rome," and of whom Mackintosh observes, "whose representations of the natural equality of men, and whose invectives against tyrants, he (Alfred), and at least with as generous a spirit, rendered into Anglo-Saxon verse."

These educational reforms were enforced with such energy that after a few years Alfred could survey his kingdom and "thank God that those who sat in the chair of instructor were capable of teaching."

He also ordained that a national record of events should be kept from year to year, which is often mentioned by writers as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It must have been something like our annual cyclopædias, giving the details of the nation's history and progress for the diffusion of correct knowledge and general intelligence. It

is stated that the king had a copy fastened by a chain at the Cathedral in Winchester, where all who could read might do so for themselves and others. These chronicles are now considered one of the most important and reliable sources of English history. They were kept continuous for almost a hundred years after the Norman Conquest.

The history of England presents many scenes of invasion and war. One of the greatest of these was when, in the last days of the tenth century, the Danes again invaded her shores, not only to plunder her, but to conquer her into complete subjection to their kings. All the people that dwelt upon the shores of the North Sea and around the Baltic were known in those ages as Goths. They overran the Continent, and there was scarcely a town or city that they had not visited. They were known by various designations according to the country they occupied. The Scandinavian Goths were on the north side of the Baltic, the German Goths on the south of it. The Ostro-Goths founded the kingdom of Italy, the Norman-Goths sliced Normandy from France. In Spain they were called Visi-Goths, on the banks of the Danube Moso-Goths, and in England they were called Danes. All were of the same stock, and had the same language, which by degrees became changed, either from their intercourse with the native inhabitants, or from the acquisition of new manners and knowledge, or from more peaceful pursuits of life induced by the precepts of Christianity. Various dialects sprung up in their widely separated colonies, giving birth to so many of the most important languages of Europe.

The Scandinavian Goths had a very peculiar system of Runic letters or characters which they employed for brief inscriptions, or in the place of written communications. These characters were principally cut in stone or on wood, and many of those on stone have been discovered and placed in museums and in archæological collections. We are familiar with the claim that the characters, þ and þ, are Gothic runes, adopted into the Anglo-Saxon alphabet, and transferred into early English to represent the sounds of *th* and *w*, as there were no other signs for those letters. The Gothic scalds, or poets, sang and recited sagas, describing the deeds that had been performed by their chiefs, or by their brave and warlike ancestors. The old Eddas, or sacred hymns, contained an account of the religion of the Goths, which no doubt resembled that of their German kindred.

The Danes who visited England about the year 1000 were of the same general character as those who had plundered the Continent. They spared neither age nor sex, they burned and destroyed what they could not use, they desecrated the shrines and churches, and put their horses in the stalls of the priests. In this dreadful war the Danes finally succeeded in placing their king upon the Saxon throne of England, by the consent of the vanquished, and established a dynasty that ruled the kingdom till the days of Edward the Confessor. A modified form of Danish idioms was introduced by this last invasion along the eastern portions of the country and as far as the Tweed. It is not a remarkable circumstance that the Danes of Scandinavia introduced a very great infusion into the colloquial speech of the people

within the region just mentioned. We can account for this only on the ground that they were more numerous than any of the invaders from other nations.

We have already remarked that the Anglo-Saxon is the basis of modern English. Compare, for instance, the following Anglo-Saxon words of King Alfred's time with words of the same form and meaning in our own language :

<i>othere</i>	}	<i>saed</i>	}	<i>his</i>	}	<i>he</i>	}
others	}	said	}	his	}	he	}
<i>kyng</i>	}	<i>manna</i>	}	<i>half</i>	}	<i>catt</i>	}
king	}	man	}	half	}	cat	}
<i>manig</i>	}	<i>nama</i>	}	<i>hand</i>	}	<i>sac</i>	}
many	}	name	}	hand	}	sack	}
<i>thin can</i>	}	<i>land</i>	}	<i>bed</i>	}	<i>apl</i>	}
to think	}	land	}	bed	}	apple	}
<i>northweadum</i>	}	<i>west</i>	}	<i>fewum</i>	}		
northward	}	west	}	few	}		
		<i>it</i>	}	<i>is</i>	}		
		it	}	is	}		

The Anglo-Saxon article *se*, which corresponds to our definite *the*, furnishes an example of the manner in which we have made several parts of speech from the variations in the declension of a single word :

	Mas.	Fem.	Neut.
Nom.	<i>se</i>	<i>seo</i>	<i>thaet</i>
Gen.	<i>thaes</i>	<i>thaere</i>	<i>thaet</i>
Dat.	<i>tham</i>	<i>thaere</i>	<i>tham</i>
Acc.	<i>thone</i>	<i>tha</i>	<i>thaet</i>

The number of words in this declension are twelve, from which we have formed the personal pronoun *them*, and the relatives *this*, *those*, *who*, *which*, and also *that* as a conjunction and an adjective, and sometimes as a

relative pronoun, so that each case of the definite article in Anglo-Saxon gives place to a word in English of nearly the same form, but applied to a different part of speech, though with nearly the same signification.

By applying this method of analyzing, one will become convinced that the great bulk of English words in current usage are mainly derived from the same source. It is estimated that the Anglo-Saxon part of our speech contains upwards of twenty-three thousand words, or more than one half of all we employ in common discourse. The hand-books give a study of one thousand Anglo-Saxon root words, and of four thousand more which have grown out of them by derivation. In many of these the characteristic terminations have been dropped, and prefixes and suffixes have been added to others, and in numerous cases by a metathesis of a syllable they have assumed their present forms in our language. From the days of Milton our authors have cultivated its ingredients and polished them into euphonious harmony, until we have a literature more classical than that of any of the tongues which have contributed to the structure of our own. ✓

Another abundant source of English is in lengthening Anglo-Saxon roots by the addition of prefixes and suffixes. An example of this is found in the word *will*. By adding a syllable we have *willing*, by another we have *willingly*, and by still another we have *willingness*. By adding the negative prefix, also of Anglo-Saxon origin, to the word, we have the same number of terms over again, as *unwilling*, *unwillingly*, and *unwillingness*. A different suffix gives another class of compounds, as *wilful*, *wilfully*, *wilfulness*, and a corres-

ponding number with the negative prefix. Thus we have created many derivatives whose roots and branches are all Anglo-Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon prefixes are twenty-three in number and the suffixes twenty-seven; and the great bulk of our compound vocables are formed by their use. The hand-book informs us that the suffix *ness* forms about thirteen hundred derivative words alone, and the negative particle *un* has an application wherever it is necessary to indicate the absence of a quality expressed by an adjective, or the condition denoted by a participle, or anything opposing or contrary to the meaning of a great number of verbs and phrases in common use; while the derivatives in *ly* and *ing* constitute a class so numerous that no attempt can be made to state or limit their extent.

I close this chapter, then, by observing that from constant use, from its facility to convey our meaning, and perhaps from an unconscious preference, we fall into the adoption of Saxon words more readily than those of any other of the ingredients of our dialect. In all compositions which relate to the daily necessities of life, to our constant emotions and desires, as well as to the amusements or conversations of the hour, or even the charms of oratory, the Anglo-Saxon predominates in our vocabulary, and is the most congenial to our ears and feelings.

CHAPTER III.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Norman Conquest. | 6. Anglo-Saxon Inflexion. |
| 2. French and Anglo-Saxon. | 7. Small Quantity of French
in Semi-Saxon. |
| 3. Semi-Saxon to 1250. | 8. The Ormulum. |
| 4. Brut of Layamon. | 9. Genesis and Exodus. |
| 5. The Ancren Riwe (Ancient
Rule). | 10. Owl and Nightingale. |

THE Norman conquest introduced the next great change in the history of our mother tongue. That event was the era of a new form of government, and a new form of language. French had previously been regarded only as an accomplishment. Most all the nobles spoke it, but it was not recognized in any official way till William the Conqueror seized the Saxon crown of England after the battle of Hastings (1066). The work of reconstruction began by establishing Norman-French as the language of the court. The laws were promulgated in French, and it was the only language taught in the schools or spoken by the nobility. The proceedings in courts of law were conducted in that tongue, and it became an object of ambition to all who had any social position to learn it and to speak it. The vernacular was threatened with extinction, but they who spoke it were still the great mass of the people, and they adhered to the ancestral tongue with a pertinacity that no influence could overawe and no inducement turn aside.

We here witness one of the most singular phenomena in the history of language. A whole people were expected to change their tongue and adopt that of a conqueror. Other kingdoms had been subdued. The Romans respected the institutions and speech of the conquered races, and made no other attempt to introduce Latin than was necessary for the transaction of business. The Goths, who overran all the kingdoms of Europe, never disturbed the native dialects of the people they subdued, and even the Normans, when they subjugated the northern region of France, actually adopted the language of the country as their own. But in England they treated the native speech as fit only for serfs and slaves, and turned it over to the lowest class of the people; and yet this despised and neglected tongue became the basis of modern English, and constitutes the greatest part of our talk in conversation, in business, and poetry. The phenomenon is a singular instance of the tenacity of human speech, and illustrates the impossibility of changing it otherwise than in the natural course of development. When we consider the extraordinary means by which it was sought to eradicate it, the power that was exerted in favor of its rival, and the depressed condition of those who spoke it, is it not surprising that it was able not only to maintain its existence, but to become the leading form of speech of those who despised and scorned it? Besides, the Norman-French was the most polished language in Europe. The great romances of chivalry, which constituted the reading of the age, were written in that dialect. The noble and the peasant were encouraged to speak it in their daily intercourse. The Saxon lawyer, as well as

the Norman, had to acquire its complete knowledge in order to practice his profession. The grand officers of state, as well as the petty ones in the employment of the government, must be familiar with it, and all grades of society above the very lowest were interested in teaching it to their children. There was no hope of favor at court without it; there was no chance of promotion or position for those who did not understand it. But the people spoke it among themselves, related the old-time traditions and sang their ballads in its old familiar tones and words, till writers began to compose and poets to make their verses in it. Thus by a series of the most extraordinary events, the language which we speak has descended to us through the ordeal of persecution and the fiery furnace of affliction, like many of the other privileges we inherit from the past.

In the course of a century and a half the two streams began to combine in the formation of our English. The Anglo-Saxon is the basis and Norman-French the superstructure of the edifice. When we compare the proportions of the two elements we will find an unexpected parity of numbers, but when we compare those in actual use we will find the Anglo-Saxon predominating more than two to one. This is not a difference in mere taste, but in the actual usefulness of the words we select. If, for instance, you were to communicate about a matter of business, you would employ Saxon terms almost exclusively; but if you issued an invitation to an evening entertainment, you would select most of your words from the French element. If you were writing an article for a magazine, you would employ both in about equal proportions, but in composing a poem you would

resort to the monosyllabic terms, which are nearly all Saxon. Take another example. If you were called upon to write a description of a battle, you would naturally fall into military phraseology, which is largely of French origin; but if you undertook to describe the peaceful life of a man who goes regularly about his daily pursuits and performs his duty to his neighbors as well as to himself, you would employ at least two thirds of your words from the Saxon element. If, however, you were a student of medicine, and were required to write a description of a disease and the remedies appropriate to its treatment, you would use a great number of words from the Latin and French combined, but even then it would be impossible to construct a single sentence without the crisp and expressive particles, that are all Saxon.

In writing a sermon or delivering an address, it would be a very great advantage to know how to use the different ingredients of our tongue in just proportions, and there can be no doubt but the most part should be of Saxon origin. It is the language of the people, and they can understand it better than any other part of our vocabulary. There is also a grace and beauty in the Saxon sounds that come home to the ear and the heart of an English speaking audience. To move the feelings, to excite the passions, and to convince the judgment are the requisites of public speaking, and these ends can be attained more strikingly with Saxon than with any other in the whole range of our language. The vernacular of a people always affects them more than foreign idioms, and the English speaker ought to remember that all the forms of ancient oratory were effective only because the speakers used the native tongue of their people without

the slightest intermixture of foreign elements. Demosthenes spoke the unmixed speech of Athens, and Cicero that of Rome, and they have established, perhaps, more than any of their contemporaries the standard of their respective nations. The greatest preachers and orators in modern times have generally pursued the same course. The long, sonorous swell of Latin vocables resounds upon the ear with a grand and solemn cadence, which fit them for great and important occasions ; but when the heart is to be touched and the feelings aroused, the orator will invariably turn to the Saxon etymons for his noblest and most tender forms of declamation.

It was not until the close of the twelfth century that English was used in prose or poetry. The earliest forms of literature are generally in verse, and such was the beginning of our own. At the period just mentioned there appeared a curious work in half-and-half Saxon and English. It was a poem in what has been styled Semi-Saxon, the earliest written form in which our language appears. It is not like anything else, for it is neither Saxon nor English, but the germ of the latter embodied in the former. This is the Brut of Layamon, and Mr. Hallam says that it "exhibits, as it were, the chrysalis of the English language." It is undoubtedly invested with that peculiar interest which attaches, if not to the first, certainly to about the first step in our own literature. A brief description of it is therefore allowable. Layamon had in his mind, as he says, the wish "to tell the noble deeds of England, and whence they came who first had English land." He laid aside for the time his sacerdotal functions, with the intention of seeking books "all over the land," to aid in his poet-

ical effort. He conceived the idea of translating into the vernacular English the story which had been composed in Latin about a hundred years before, by Geoffroy of Monmouth, and which had been rendered into Norman-French by Wace, a Norman poet of that day, with great fidelity to the original. Layamon was a poet of a different stamp. He added to the original about as much again as it contained, and rewrote the whole narrative with a large infusion of other fables that were popular at the period when he lived, and the passages with which he enlarged the work are so frequent as to amount to an almost complete change of the text. And what he added is thought to be better than the original. The great length of the poem and the extremely antiquated form of the language will prevent it from being read, except by the student of early English. But Sir Frederick Madden has edited an edition of the work with a great amount of notes full of historical value, and rendered the whole poem literally into modern English, so there is some hope that this interesting relic may become more familiar to the English speaking world.

The fable of the story is partially borrowed from the *Æneid* of Virgil. *Æneas* of Troy has a grandson born of a princess, daughter of a *Saturin* king, whose birth causes the death of his mother, and who afterwards kills his father accidentally while hunting in the forest. His name is *Brutus*, and upon being banished from the country, he wanders over the sea till he touches land at a Grecian island, where he consults the oracle of *Diana*, who directs him to a land in the West in which to settle with his followers. He sails along the Mediterranean, and other Trojans from Greece and Spain and from the

islands near Sicily join his fleets, which finally land upon Albion's isle. He calls the island Britain after his own name, and founds a new Troy on the site of London, building temples to the Trojan gods and establishing Trojan customs and laws for the government. From him springs the dynasty of British kings, and the Britons, who peopled the land, are the descendants of his followers. The kings of the Britons are described, especially Arthur of the Round Table, who was the greatest of them all. The exploits of this monarch and his knights are the chief theme of the latter part of the poem. King Arthur always appears full of courage and knightly courtesy. The descriptions are often highly poetical, and the great characters are drawn with the hand of a master. Take, for an instance, the story of King Arthur when he appears covered with armor and glistening with steel; he mounts his charger, and rushing into the lists shivers his lance into splinters, and then drawing his sword continues the combat. The fight between Gwain, the Green Knight, and the three monsters that beset his journey when in quest of the chapel in the forest, is another example; or again, when the brave Lancelot appears in the court of Camolet, and seems to be under a spell of magic, but rallying his steed and sinking his spurs in his flanks, he escapes the trammels of the magician and severs the head of his enchanter. The whole poem is founded upon fabulous traditions, as if they were taken from the genuine page of history, and recounts great battles in which men perform feats of strength and valor that could only be possible if they were assisted by some power greatly above what is human. But it was the age of marvels.

The deeds of Arthur, the exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve pairs, the mighty blast of Roland's horn, which was heard at the distance of three leagues like a peal of thunder, and the enchanted life of Merlin, the Wizard, were the themes of poetry and historical romances for many generations, and have served even down to the present day to exercise an influence upon our literature. The "Idyls of the King" and the "Song of Roland" belong to the same realm of fiction, and have delighted and will continue to delight mankind till poetry shall lose its charm and fable its attractive attribute.

In style and orthography the poem has the appearance of an extinct language. Most of the words are now changed in form, hundreds of them are obsolete, but a great many remain in meaning as they are used in modern English. The nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs are wholly derived from the Anglo-Saxon, but the perplexing case endings of the Anglo-Saxon declensions are greatly modified. In the latter language the genders, numbers, and persons of nouns were represented by case endings, and nouns, adjectives, and pronouns relating to each other agreed in their terminations, as in the Latin. Layamon follows this model and generally, though not always, expresses these relations by the form of the terminations. There is, however, a tendency to drop the case endings, or rather, perhaps, to confound them. In other words, he uses the same endings for the nominative, accusative, and vocative, both in the singular and plural. He also merges the dative and instrumental, and resorts to prepositions, a great abundance of which he derived from the Saxon dialect, in

which they were in constant use, as well as inflected forms to impart precision in the order of expression. The tendency to suppress these terminations led to the art of connecting words by the aid of particles, and by arranging them in juxtaposition; and this mode was still further advanced in the Ormulum, and almost completed in Chaucer, according to what is now the practice. He preserves the personal pronouns, *he*, *his*, and *him*, which are found in the Anglo-Saxon declensions, and he seems to use them in the same way as that observable in English grammar; but *heo* and *hit* did not give way to *she* and *it* for nearly a century later, and *heore* (their) and *heom* (them) did not approach their present form till the invention of printing. Chaucer constantly uses *hir* to signify *their* and *her*. Indeed, the decay of pronominal forms commenced by Layamon, is not so strikingly obvious as to justify an attempt to lay much stress upon the changes. The definite article in Anglo-Saxon was declined with numbers, genders, and cases, making twenty-four different forms in all. It had also an indeclinable article or character, *þe* (the), used for all cases and genders. In Vol. I., page 2, in the later text, we have this instance:

þat he wolde of Engeland
 þe histresse telle.

(That he would of England the history tell.) Layamon, sometimes in the earlier text, and most always in the last, employs this monosyllable instead of the senseless inflexions of the old grammar. The improvement was so obvious that the old terminations became obsolete, and this form of the article was soon established in its modern use. He has also the indefinite article *a*, which

makes this part of speech complete. Sir Frederick Madden cites this line as an example, Vol. II, page 65 :

Buten *a* few wifmen.

(But a few women.) This form is indeclinable throughout. The form *an* appears to be declined in all the oblique cases. We read the first line on page 64, id. :

Heo bigunnen *aenne* castel.

(He began a castle.) Here *aenne* is found in the accusative case, and is derived from "an," a word of the same form, meaning one. Indeed, it is not till we come to Chaucer that we find this form of the article *a* as now. The verbs are characterized by the innumerable varieties of inflexion in the Anglo-Saxon conjugations, but to him is due the first appearance of *shall*, *will*, *would*, and *could* as auxiliaries. He made a great change in the present participle, which, ending in *ende* and *inde*, he turned into *inge*. It still forms a part of modern speech, with the final *e* retrenched, and gives us an endless supply of verbal nouns and adjectives. He is said to have been the first to put the accusative case after a passive verb, so that instead of "I am forbidden to eat meat," he says "I am forbidden meat." He introduces the possessive personal pronoun *his* to express the genitive case. In describing King Lear, when he cursed his youngest daughter, he says :

Iwaera *his* hude and *his* heowe.

(His skin and his hue turned.) He also planted the preposition, *of*, which finally superseded the genitive case, the last of the classical forms to disappear in the progressive fusion of our grammar. We find innumerable words in this poem that are constantly in our

mouths, such as prepositions and conjunctions. These, however, he inherited from our common ancestors, and he has also such words as *christendom*, *cross*, *dead*, *life*, *bold*, *time*, *winter*, *craft*, *talk*, *hail*, *rock*, and many others, to say nothing of the multitude which have changed their meaning or spelling. Of the latter, here are some examples:

<i>helpe</i>	help	<i>hors</i>	horse
<i>heiher</i>	hither	<i>idelnesse</i>	idleness
<i>hille</i>	hill	<i>lande</i>	land
<i>ham</i>	home	<i>token</i>	took
<i>helm</i>	helmet	<i>god</i>	good
<i>hand</i>	hand		

He interchanges vowels, and often uses a single one in place of a diphthong, and sometimes a vowel, a consonant, and even a syllable disappear in favor of his measure, if it can be said he has any measure. There was no standard yet, and every writer spelled and twisted his words to suit himself. As already intimated, there are two texts of Layamon. The latest came many years after the first, and some marked changes must have been engrafted upon the language in the interval. Old words, and even phrases, have become obsolete, the alterations in orthography are numerous, and Sir Frederick Madden informs us that the later text is seldom uniform, "but exhibits everywhere the effects of a gradual desuetude of the original structure of the Anglo-Saxon forms of grammar." The author failed to enrich his vocabulary with words of foreign origin, and he rejects the Norman-French as if it were unknown, thus showing the anti-Norman feeling one hundred and fifty years after the battle of Hastings. There are, however, more

words of Norman origin in the later text than in the first one, and there are only two or three Latin words in hundreds of lines.

The Brut of Layamon is said to be among the earliest examples of rhyme, three and even four lines rhyming together, followed by several lines that do not rhyme at all. Couplets and triplets are scattered about at irregular intervals, without rule or principle, and the alliterative system, which was the main distinction of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, is also preserved; while there are many portions that possess no one of these characteristics. The lines are of unequal length, of four, five, six, seven, and eight syllables, and capitals are not used at the beginning of the lines, except after a full stop. Indeed, the poem is not constructed on any plan of regular versification. It is in the old Saxon alliterative metre; that is, the lines are divided into iambs of two feet each, making four syllables to a verse. In the first two feet there is a word in each beginning with the same initial letter, and one word with the same initial letter in the first foot of the second line. The pause, or *cæsure*, is between the feet so as to make the harmony. The syllables are a long and a short one alternately, and the former is twice as long as the latter, and this is called the quantity of the verse; but it is not very likely that Layamon observed these rules very strictly, for the lines are quite irregular, sometimes a distich and sometimes two lines in a verse. The harmony consists in placing a pause, as just observed, at the end of every foot, and accentuating the first syllable in every word, thus giving a swinging sound to the voice in reading; that is, if we can judge the intention of the poet. But

it is extremely difficult to determine what rules of prosody, if any, were considered by him. I am aware that Sir Frederick Madden is of opinion that the rules upon which Layamon relied for his harmony are quite clear and intelligible. This may have appeared so to Sir Frederick, who bestowed a study of many years upon the work, and quite likely he caught the cadence in the course of his protracted labors. But to an ordinary ear or eye it would be all but impossible to mention a single line where any settled rule is observed. The author was probably well acquainted with the rules of Latin prosody, but he has certainly failed to apply them to his verse, and there is not much reason to believe that, at that early day, there was any great attention paid to the subject of metrical harmony.

Mr. Guest thinks that Layamon gave accents, that is, increased loudness, to his rhyming and his alliterative syllables; but it may well be doubted if mere loudness or sharpness of tone can add to the harmony of a verse. The grammar is not consistent. The verb is often in one place and the subject so far from it that it is difficult to make the connection. The adjectives have generally the same declensions as in Anglo-Saxon, but they are not adhered to uniformly, and there is a marked tendency to neglect them. The amount of the whole change from the Anglo-Saxon consists in dropping the old terminations and in taking on newer forms in their place, the freer use of the article for pointing out the object in its simple form of *the*. The old Anglo-Saxon forms were melting away. The inflexions were crumbling under the grinding process of common usage, and the particles were creeping into importance as the means of connecting words and sen-

tences, but had not yet acquired a definite place or even a name in the language, except to designate the subject of a verb or the objective case of a noun.

But the great value of the Brut of Layamon is its bold attempt to write the new language in accordance with the forms it had acquired in his day. It was the spoken dialect of the people, and no one used it who knew either French or Latin. The common people did not understand the art of reading or writing; there were no schools for their instruction, and it is barely possible that they could dimly follow the mass in the language of the church, or sing the hymns of the Holy Nativity in the days of Christmastide. No one was able even to teach them the forms of their own dialect. There were no rules of orthography, and none on the subject of composition. All was new and untried, and perhaps there were few who could read what Layamon wrote. These difficulties, however, seemed to have stimulated Layamon. He wished to see the vernacular put into such shape as would show it fit for literary composition. He was deeply impressed, doubtless, with the condition of the masses, deprived as they were of nearly all the means of cultivation. He must have felt that a whole people could not always remain in such a degree of ignorance and oppression as he daily witnessed. When we recall the fact that it was the age of iron despotism, that all power was in the hands of the oppressors, and that the means of making one's way in the world were engrossed by a class of men who cared nothing for the poor and despised of the land, we can somewhat imagine the condition of things that confronted Layamon when he commenced his work. He deserves our gratitude for his unselfish labors to

preserve and improve our mother tongue. He was the first to show that the great subjects upon which the literature of that day was engaged, could be treated in that dialect which his countrymen understood. In this way he rendered great and invaluable service to the language of the humble people like those who constituted the bulk of his flock. He was a fair example of Chaucer's good parson, and did his best to raise up the humble to a higher plane of existence and hope. There are many examples of this kind recorded in history, but none, I think, are so remarkable as that of Layamon. His church upon the banks of the Severn was a pleasant retreat. We can imagine that he was respected and loved by his people, and honored as a man of learning by his superiors. But forsaking all these, he undertakes a laborious journey through a country that was a comparative wilderness. He sets out alone, not in quest of adventures, but in a search for books, for information, and study. Nor does he return till he has found many an old manuscript, many a withered and tattered folio, many a rude old missal, many a curious relic of the old writers; and perhaps loading his treasures upon his mule or other beast of burden, he travels homeward, and laying down his precious load upon the altar where he worships, he turns their leaves over "lovingly."

Brave old man! He brings to his stately church upon the Severn the books he has borne through the wilderness, and which he has gathered from many a cloister cell, from many a priestly library, from the crypts of the great cathedrals, where they had lain neglected and mouldering in dampness and oblivion. He pursues his design with unabated ardor in the abodes of wealth and

power, and in the humble dwellings of the poor, who have snatches of ballads and old-time traditions, and he interests them all in his mission, for he tells alluring tales of romance, how fair ladies fell in love with humble men for their worth and valor; how Roland blew his magic horn at Roncesvalles. He relates the marvels of the grand old days when Arthur held sway all over the land and sea, and how he fought and fell and went to fairy-land with the beautiful virgins of Avalon. We can easily imagine the good priest telling all these wonderful things in hall and hovel, and delighting his simple-minded hosts, who were delighted to give him shelter and food, and good cheer and fellowship. There is nothing improbable in all this, for the story-teller in those days was received and treated as a friend. He was a welcome guest, and whenever he arrived at any place or home the neighbors gathered to hear the news and enjoy his recitals.

We do not speak of Layamon's Brut on account of its literary merits, but for the invaluable service it rendered in rescuing our language from utter neglect, and putting it in such form that others might follow. And such was the result, for native writers appeared in various parts of the country, and in the course of that and the following century a great mass of manuscripts accumulated, that have been exhumed by our students of early English, showing us how great a vein was opened in the English heart and intellect.

I select a few lines from the older text, A, of the poem, in order to illustrate the foregoing remarks upon its structure and grammar. (Vol. II., pp. 463-4.) The specimen will also afford a view of the singular appearance

of our language at that early day. It is an account of the arming of King Arthur when preparing for the battle against Colgrim and Childric, near the town of Bath. It is also one of the additions that Layamon made to the original poem. I have substituted the letters *th* for the two Anglo-Saxon characters that they are usually made to represent. I have also used the letter *g* for the character that is sometimes employed instead of that letter in early English. This may lessen the difficulty of the reader with injury to the text :

Tha he hafde al iset
 and al hit isemed
 tha dude he on his burne
 ibroide of stele,
 the makede on alnise smith
 mid athelen his crafte,
 he wes ihate Wygar,
 the witege wurhte.
 His seonken he helede
 mid hose of stele,
 Calibeorne his sword
 he sweinde bi his side,
 hit wes iworht in Aualun
 mid wigcle-fulle craften.
 Halm he set on hafde,
 hæh of stele
 ther o wes moni gim-ston
 al mid golde bigon.
 He wes Vderes
 thas athen kinges,
 he wes ihaten Goswhit,
 ælehen othere vnlie.
 He heng an his sweore,
 ænne sceld deore,
 his nome wes on Bruttise

Pridwen ihaten,
 ther wes innen igræuen
 mid rede golde stanen
 an en-lienes deore,
 of drihtenes moder.
 His spere he nom an honde,
 tha Ron wes ihaten.
 Tha he hasden al his iweden
 tha leop he on his steden.
 Tha he mihte bihalden
 tha bihalues stoden
 thene uæreste eniht
 tha verde seolde leden,
 ne isæh næuere na men,
 selere eniht nenne
 thene him wes Arthur.

I subjoin the literal rendering of the above passage, by Mr. Madden, into English :

When he had set all, and it all beseemed, then he put on his burny (breastplate), fashioned of steel, that an elvish smith made with his excellent craft ; he was named Wygar, the witty wright. His shanks (legs) he covered with hose of steel. Caliburn, his sword, he hung by his side ; it was wrought in Avalon, with magic craft. Helm he set on his head, high, of steel ; thereon was many gem stones, all encompassed with gold. It was Uthers, the noble king ; it was named Goswhit, each other unlike. He hung on his neck a precious shield ; its name was in British called Pridven ; therein was engraved a precious image of God's mother. His spear he took in hand, that was called Ron. When he had all his weeds, then leapt he on his steed. Then might they behold who stood beside him, the fairest knight that ever host should lead. Never saw any man better knight than Arthur ; he was noblest of race.

The Brut of Layamon was written about 1205, according to the authority of Sir Frederick Madden. When the century was fifteen years older, a book called

the "Ancren Riwe" (ancient rule) made its appearance, and it is thought to be the oldest sample of English prose that has yet been discovered ; and being a prose composition, it attests the current modifications which marked this transition period of our language much better than the rhyming histories of the same age. In style and orthography, it seems to our modern eyes as if it had once been Anglo-Saxon, but had been seized by a barbarous hand and twisted out of shape. Mr. Edmund Brock, in a paper contributed to Transactions of the Philological Society, Part I., 1865, p. 150, shows that there is considerable regularity in the grammatical forms occurring in the Ancren Riwe, that its language bears a striking resemblance to the Anglo-Saxon, and that the nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs retain many of their former inflections, but that anomalies and changes are of frequent occurrence. He thinks the date of the work is probably about 1220-30. The book has been edited and translated for the Camden Society by James Morton, who is of opinion that Bishop Poor was the author, and wrote it for the use of three sisters, who had retired to a religious house at Tarente, in Dorsetshire, for the purpose of engaging in pious and devout exercises. It furnishes much information in regard to the state of religion, and the doctrines and services of the church ; and lays down the rules of conduct which should regulate the lives of the three pious women who had withdrawn from the world. The following extract will serve to show the early forms in which English prose began to emerge from the Anglo-Saxon cradle, in which its infancy was rocked ; and it will also afford a glimpse of the way in which recluses

were expected to live. It is transcribed from the edition prepared for the Camden Society (pp. 6 and 7) and is No. 57 of its publications :

De vittre riwle ȝet þuſton cleopede is monnes findles; nis for noþing elles iſtald bute forte ſeruie ȝe inre. þet mekeð feſton, wakien, kold, here werien, ſwuch oðre heardſchipes þet moni flechs mai þolien moni ne, mai nout. Vor þi moi þeos riwle chungen hire miſliche ofter euch ones manere efter hire efne. Vor ſum is ſtrong, ſum is unſtrong, mei ful wel beo ewite paie god mid leſſe. Sum is clergesse, ſum is nout, mot te more wurchen, an oðer wiſe ſiggen hire ures. Sum is old atelich is de leaſſe dred of. Sum is gung linelich is neode þe betere ward. Vor þi ſchal efrich ancre habben þe uttre riwle, efter ſcriſtes read, hwat ſe he bit hat hire don in obedience ȝe enoweð hire manere hire ſtreneð, he mai þe vittre riwle chaungen efter wiſdom alſe he iſehð þet te inre mai beon beſt iholden.

Nothing could more clearly ſhow the vaſt transformation that our language has paſſed through in eight hundred years than Mr. Morton's translation of this paſſage into modern Engliſh. Here it is :

“The external rule, which I called the handmaid, is of man's contrivance; nor is it inſtituted for anything elſe but to ſerve the external law. It ordains faſting, watching, enduring cold, wearing haircloth, and ſuch other hardships as the fleſh of many can bear and many cannot. Wherefore this rule may be changed and varied according to every one's ſtate and circumſtances. For ſome are ſtrong; ſome are weak, and may very well be excuſed, and pleaſe God with leſſe; ſome are learned and ſome are not, and muſt work the more, and ſay their prayers at the ſtated hours in a different manner. Some are old and ill-favored, of whom there is leſſe fear; ſome are young and lively, and have need to be more on their guard. Every anchoreſſ muſt therefore obſerve the outward rule, according to the advice of her confeſſor, and do all obediently whatever he enjoins and commands her, who knows her ſtate and her ſtrength. He may modify the external rule, as prudence may direct, and as he ſees that the inward rule may thus be beſt kept.”

The work is one of great interest, from the fact of its being the first, or among the first, attempts to write our language in prose, and exhibits the appearance of Anglo-Saxon when it was merging into English. For instance, many of the words retain the Anglo-Saxon form, but are shorn of its inflexions, and they appear to be borrowed from all the dialects spoken by the different tribes before they came to Britain. The Angles, who settled north of the river Thames and towards the east, were the most numerous of the invaders, and many of their words and forms of expression must have traveled to Dorsetshire, where the Ancient Rule was composed, and had there become incorporated with the local dialects. In this way the etymologies of this little book can be traced back to the shores of Holstein, Hanover, and along the North Sea. There is no reason to believe that the Saxon had a greater share in forming the general language than any of the others, and it is certain that they all entered into the composition of the new one. In the South, where the Saxons and Jutes predominated, their peculiar forms attest their influence, and in the eastern and midland districts the language was principally derived from the Angles; and further to the north still, other peculiarities attest where the Danes and Scandinavians had settled in large numbers. In the Ancient Rule we find Saxon forms with an intermixture of those from the north, thus proving that there was a gradual fusion going on, and a remote approximation to the general standard, that finally became the literary language of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is interesting thus to trace our modern idioms back to their first appearance, and the

Ancren Riwle is, in this respect, a work of no inconsiderable interest to the English philologist.

The historical study of the English language requires us to search out the changes which it has undergone, and we will find that these changes consist very much in the disappearance of Anglo-Saxon inflexions. It is not the least extraordinary among its perplexities that the Anglo-Saxon developed the power of extending and retrenching the sense of the adjective by ascribing to it the different meanings of singular and plural numbers, of feminine, masculine, and neuter genders, of two declensions, comprising four cases in the singular and the same number in the plural, resulting in over fifty modifications; and these again are either strong or weak according to the article which precedes them. We may reasonably conjecture that so many refinements in the simplest part of speech would be very inconvenient in the practical use of the language. So many forms of selection must have perplexed the vulgar and confused the learned. In the Ancren Riwle the adjective often appears without any of these distinctions, and the comparative and superlative degrees are formed by adding *er* or *re* and *est* to the positive. These are the first important steps towards the simplicity and precision of the adjective in its modern form.

The Anglo-Saxon inflexions of the substantives are less varied and quite often rejected in the Ancren Riwle. And here, at the expense of an apparent digression from our subject, I desire to notice a phase of Anglo-Saxon which will enlighten what we have to say in regard to the noun. It will be remembered that education among the Anglo-Saxons was confined almost

exclusively to classical studies, especially the Latin. Their authors used the Latin language in their writings and correspondence. There were no books for the instruction of the common people until King Alfred translated the Bible for their use. This course of study in the extinct languages was strictly observed by the monastic orders. It is not a matter of much wonder that men so deeply imbued with the humanities, as they were called, should impart the rules of Latin speech into the grammatical forms of the Anglo-Saxon; but it is surprising that they should adopt the Teutonic vocabularies in mass, and transfer at the same time the Latin syntax to a language with which it had no affinity. We find that a knowledge of any one of the five or six Romance languages suffices to unlock all the others, and that the Latin is the master key to them all, because they all descended from the same Latin stock. The Saxon vernacular had an origin from a Northern people, who retained their peculiar and distinct dialects. The Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, the Frisians, the Danes, and the Scandinavians had all amalgamated upon the island and formed a tongue with scarcely a trace from the classical lexicon. This unique paradox of harnessing a living language to the grammatical government of a dead one, will cease to excite our surprise when we bear in mind that the Latin grammar contained the only rules then known for the construction of language. The Saxon writers therefore resorted, without hesitation, to the Latin modes of relation, just as a builder would to a fine cement to hold together the foundation, pillars, and walls of the edifice hewn from the rude granite of the Anglo-Saxon material.

But to return to the noun as displayed in the Ancren Riwe. The Anglo-Saxon noun had a great variety of case endings, sometimes by adding a letter or a syllable, or by removing them from the word, and these inflexions were used, as in the Latin, to mark its relation to the sentence. The cases were four, named respectively the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, and perhaps a vocative or instrumental, in place of the ablative. It had three numbers, three genders, and five declensions, giving over a hundred different forms of selection, to say nothing of other distinctions, in regard to abstract and irregular nouns, in regard to strong and weak nouns, in regard to the stem and theme of the root, and the euphonic changes, which embraced a great variety of modifications, besides a great number of irregular forms. We know that the Anglo-Saxon noun has come over to a single declension in modern English, but perhaps we are not aware that this tendency is first observable in this obscure and curious little book. The case endings are frequently missing, and many of them lost. Mr. Brock informs us in his analysis of the Ancren Riwe, that the verbs retain nearly all the Anglo-Saxon inflexions, but that the nouns have lost their endings to a considerable extent, and that the declensions are simpler and less varied. In Anglo-Saxon, gender was often applied without regard to natural sex, but in this book there is an attempt to distinguish gender according to real sex, and soon after this time all trace of the grammatical gender is lost.

The possessive personal pronoun *his* is still encroaching upon the genitive, though the latter will hold its ground for nearly two centuries longer. Indeed, all the

possessives have nearly attained their present form: *min, thin, his, hire (her), ure, ower (your), our, hore (their)*. We also recognize the personal pronouns *Ich (I), ther, the (thee), we, us, ye, ou (you), he, hit (it), heo (she), him, hire (her)*. The neuter relative pronouns *which* and *what* make their appearance, though no one would suspect them in the orthography of *hwne* and *hwat*, but by placing the *w* before the initial *h* we have perfectly familiar forms. The suffix *ful* is found in such words as *pinful, dredful*, and sometimes a superlative is placed in front of them, as *mest pinful, mest dredful*. Verbal nouns are scattered upon every page; new adverbs crop out, Layamon's preposition *of* is repeated, and the whole is garnished with many words of Scandinavian, Icelandic, Danish, and even Celtic derivation. The Latin quotations are very numerous, and the French words amount to three or four per cent. of the whole.

The swarms that invaded England through so many generations, though of the same Gothic stock and language, were each distinguished by the peculiar dialect of the tract of country from which they emigrated. The wild tribes scattered over the regions from the Baltic to the mouth of the Rhine, joined the ranks of the invaders and expelled the vanquished inhabitants. The Jutes under Hengist and Horsa commenced their incursions in 449, and after a struggle of six years succeeded in founding the kingdom of Kent in the Southeast. In 477 the Saxons under their leader, Ella, seized upon the country south and west of the former, and established the kingdom of the South Saxons. In 495 the kingdom of Wessex was added by another eruption. This was soon followed by the subjugation

of Essex and another kingdom of that name. Still later the Angles took possession of Norfolk and Suffolk and named their conquest the kingdom of East Anglia. The eastern coast as far north as what is now Lincolnshire fell a prey to the Danes and Scandinavians, while still another tribe of Angles occupied the country north of the Humber, including that part of Scotland which lies between the Tweed and the Firth of Forth. As late as the 10th century the Danes appeared again, and ravaging the coasts of East Anglia imposed their own monarchy upon all England, and Danish kings ruled from one end of it to the other for half a century.

These peoples were of the same Teutonic stock, speaking closely related dialects of the same language, each bringing with it many words and idiomatic phrases unknown to the others. Those introduced by the Jutes, Saxons, Angles, Danes, Scandinavians, all blending into a form of speech which ultimately assumed the name of Anglo-Saxon. Its mosaic inlays were abundantly tinged with traces of the original dialects which combined in producing it. No one of these dialects had at the period of Semi-Saxon taken precedence as the exclusively literary language of the whole country. Each writer used the forms and terms with which he was most familiar. The terms which compose the language of Layamon's Brut were undoubtedly in current usage in Worcestershire, where he lived and composed his romance. In the Ormulum the distinctly marked character of its Danish orthography affords evidence of a Northeastern origin, where the incursive Danes settled in great numbers. This is perhaps the reason why the author of the Ormulum always doubles

the consonants after a short vowel, and sometimes even when it is the initial letter, as *tthat* for *thatt*. In the Owl and Nightingale we are presented with evidence of its West of England parentage, where the manuscript was originally found, while the Genesis and Exodus is as evidently from Midland or Suffolk, where many counterpart words of the original are still in constant use. Many of these peculiarities still characterize the different provinces of England and are, if anything, more numerous than the kingdoms into which the invaders divided the country. The Scandinavians passed over in large numbers to the British coast directly opposite to their own, and this accounts for the Norse element in the provincialisms of the North, while it is easy to find words proper alone to the Saxons, who subjugated the South and Midland districts. What a variance you will find between the local dialects of Durham and Essex, and how much do the Western shires differ from those of the East, and the Midland from them both; to say nothing of the strange basis from which the speech of Cornwall must have been derived, and which is distinct from them all. In 1874 not less than seventeen glossaries had been reprinted, illustrating as many different dialects, and containing provincial words that cannot be found in the ordinary English dictionaries.

A more complete familiarity with the Semi-Saxon is thought by etymologists to be quite as essential at the present moment to an English speaking people, as the introduction of either French or Latin neologisms. Its harsh sounds have died away, and its native ruggedness has been polished and softened like a transmigration

into another language. No doubt it was plain English as spoken by Saxon tongues and heard by Saxon ears in the 13th century. We cannot wonder at the obscurity of its grammar and the uncouthness of its orthography.

With regard to the lingual ingredients of the Semi-Saxon literature, it is remarkable as containing scarcely any but words of Anglo-Saxon origin. We have already seen how few Norman-French words are found in the *Brut* of Layamon. The same neglect of that language is apparent in all the literary remains of that period. In the *Owl and Nightingale*, which tells in about eighteen hundred lines "how birds conversed as well as sang," there are only about twenty words that are not distinctly Anglo-Saxon; and in the *Genesis* and *Exodus*, that renders the scriptural account of the creation, in four thousand one hundred and sixty-two verses there are only about fifty from other sources.* While many of the words assume their English type, we are led to suspect there are other reasons than those of ignorance or prejudice for this almost total exclusion of French and Latin elements. The contemporaneous French was the most cultivated form of living speech, and possessed a rich and copious literature. We have at the present day numerous writings of the 13th century in that language, which still excite admiration by their taste and refinement. It was superseding the Latin among the scholars of Europe, and authors of other nations employed it in preference to the Latin, on account of the felicity of its terms. An Italian employed it, saying, "If any shall ask me why this book is written in

*The *Ormulum* and the *Genesis* and *Exodus* are written in the archaic Semi-Saxon, but in point of time were produced shortly after the commencement of Early English, and they will therefore be more particularly treated in our account of the latter period.

Romance, according to the patois of France, I being born Italian, I shall say it is for divers reasons. The one is that I am now in France, the other is that French is the most delightful of tongues, and partaketh most of the common nature of all languages."

The Provençal poetry and metrical romances of France were the standard literature of Europe. Besides, Norman-French had been the official and literary language of England for one hundred and fifty years, and English writers had employed it even more frequently than the Latin, and all England resounded with the songs of the *trouvères* and the legends of Alexander and Charlemagne. English verses were either translated from the French, or constructed in the metrical form of its poetry. The Brut of Layamon was an English dress of a French copy, and the Ormulum dropped Anglo-Saxon alliteration and appropriated French measure and modes of rhyming. Nor should we forget that all the Semi-Saxon writers were members of the monastic orders and, therefore, presumably familiar with classical Latin, and in the services of the church they must have heard the Eolian vowels of Rome almost daily. Why, then, did they use so few words of a Latin parentage, and still fewer of the almost equally classical French, and restrict themselves to Saxon radicals alone? The works we have seen were in poetry, with the exception of the Ancren Riwe, which is in prose, and is enriched with verbal accretions from other sources besides the Saxon only to the extent of five per cent. of the whole. And yet no language could be more direct and realistic than that employed by these ancient rhymers. The Gothic particles with which they link

their antique orthographies together give both certainty and precision to their meaning, and laid the foundation for our system of placing words in the order of expression and of using the indeclinable parts of speech instead of the variant forms of inflexion.

The writings of that time are very ordinary every way, alternating with the deeds of King Arthur, the corruptions of the church, and the small, sad life of the common people. They were written in the plainest and most idiomatic terms, that formed the vernacular staple of these half-and-half Englishmen. There is no revelation of art here, none of the graces from above. We catch in these mouldy texts a mediocrity of thought and an obscure background of realism, without any attempt at noble expressions or delicate shades of meaning. It is true that Layamon exhibits here and there in his long poem decided revelations of poetic invention, and occasionally we have a short and graphic sentiment.

Nis nawer nan so wes mon
þat me ne mai bi-sweken.

(There is nowhere a man so wise that one may not deceive him.)

Aele eniht ah an uuel to don
aer he worse vuder-son.

(Each man may do an evil action ere he himself receive one.) He has also some amusing details, as in the long passage describing the fight with the Irish, Vol. II., p. 332.

The author of the *Ancren Riwle* shows great learning in mediæval Latin, and he must have been a pious and benevolent soul, judging from his exhortations to

the dear sisters for whose instruction and edification he was writing. The translation of the *Brut*, by Sir Fred-eric Madden, seeks to render the exact sense of the original, almost line for line. The *Ancren Riwe*, on the other hand, is turned into the copious and elegant English of the present day, and is more of a paraphrase than a mere translation. No doubt the spirit has been preserved, but the body is gone, and the good bishop who composed it would fail to recognize his own work in its new dress. The translator has evidently adopted Dryden's rule in translating a foreign author, "to endeavor to make him speak that kind of English which he would have spoken had he lived in England and had written in this age."

Aside from their linguistic value, these archaic relics reveal that boldness of speech which still characterizes their descendants the world over. The writers presumably exhibit the spirit of the people, as it was for them they wrote. They speak right out, and never resort to an euphemism in expressing their censure of abuses in church or state. Indeed, from the earliest specimens of our insular tongue it has been the language of free thought, and through all its historical vicissitudes its accents have been raised to the highest pitch against all forms of oppression. Liberty was a difficult word under the settled governments across the channel. It was never pronounced willingly at that epoch, and only heard as a terrible secret, and whoever deliberated upon its maxims walked upon burning coals.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY ENGLISH—1250-1350.

1. Early English, 1250-1350.
2. Three Principal Dialects.
3. Literature Begins with Poetry.
4. The Minstrels of this Period.
5. Robert of Gloucester. His Works Described. Changes Made by Him in Early English.
6. Robert Manning. His Works and Genius. He Stems the Tide of Norman-French Innovations. His Influence Upon Our Language.
7. *Cursor Mundi* and *Genesis* and *Exodus*. Paraphrasing Bible Stories into Early English.
8. *The Ormulum*. An Attempt to Settle Orthography.
9. *The Ayenbite of Inwit*. The Southern Dialect.
10. *Mediaeval Saintship*. Its Effect on Early English. Written in the Popular Speech.
11. Early English Alliterative Poems.
12. *The Hermit of Hampole*. Sketch of His Life and Works. His Use of Saxon Terms in Preaching.
13. Moral and Religious Pieces.
14. The Arthur Romances. The Series of the Round Table Recounted. Their Influence on Modern Literature.
15. *Hugh of the Royal Palace*. He Drops the Saxon Inflexions.
16. *Walter Mapes*.
17. *Merlin, the Wizard*.
18. *Sir Thomas Malory*.
19. *William of Parlerne*. Grammatical Anomalies.
20. *Havelok, the Dane*. Fluctuating Forms of Speech.
21. *King Horn*. Midland Forms.
22. *Life of Alexander*. The Commencement of Norman-French.
23. *The Geste Historial*. Dropping Inflexions. History of Troy, the Ancient Town.
24. *Roger Bacon*.
25. *Henry Bracton*.
26. *Duns Scotus*.
27. *William Occam* and the Schoolmen. The Words Contributed Still in Use.
28. Changes and Improvements in the Transition from Semi-Saxon to Early English.

WE now pass to the chronological division of our language commonly called "Early English," during which the Normans began to adopt the speech of their vassals, and the latter were gradually ingrafting Nor-

man terms upon our Anglo-Saxon stem. Many words now make their appearance in English compositions that bear *prima facie* evidence upon their face of having descended from the old French, or from the lexicon in which the Conqueror uttered his commands on the field of Hastings. The corruption of the Anglo-Norman tongue had proceeded from the beginning of the century (13th), and the influence of English authors was making itself strongly felt upon the foreign element. Perhaps the native writers had stripped this early English too bare of grammatical machinery and philological aids to thought; it was nevertheless distinguished by its energetic eloquence, and by a nicety of observation and a correctness of thought and expression, by which it gained an unparalleled victory over the church Latin and the court French, and has held it firmly ever since.

The Semi-Saxon extended probably from 1150 to 1250, just one hundred years; and the term Early English is applied from the last date to the next succeeding century, ending in 1350. It is, of course, impossible to establish a sharp line of separation between the different periods of English, for they melt into each other like the colors of the rainbow. For instance, the Genesis and Exodus (to be referred to presently), which marks the beginning of early English, is in a vocabulary almost exclusively Semi-Saxon; but the myriad specimens of authorship belonging to the former, assume an appearance quite modern. These texts have been slumbering in forgotten tomes for ages, and are now rejuvenated by the research and taste of the collaborators of the Early English Text Society, and published with commentaries and glos-

saries, to elucidate their obscurities. A great many of the manuscripts have been placed in the British Museum for preservation; but the university and cathedral libraries in every part of the kingdom, as well as many private collections, teem with these literary and historical treasures. It was a period of more intellectual work than we have usually attributed to that remote age, and we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the eminent men and scholars by whose labors the fathers of our ancient literature once more emerge out of the gloom of centuries, arrayed in their antique phraseology and lifting the curtain upon the mailed knights, the feats of arms, the lovely maidens, and all the splendors of a gorgeous chivalry. One can almost imagine a poetic fulfillment in this historical perspective of the grand old prophecy, that King Arthur would return from the vale of Avalon, with his mighty *excalibar*, for the deliverance and glory of his people.

At the commencement of Early English, the language was still laboring under the disadvantage of confused inflexions and a syntax singularly irregular. It had grown slowly and was still in a state of progress; it is, however, allowable to say that it was at length brought into something like definite shape. The phonetic meaning of the letters seems to have been understood. The orthography in the Semi-Saxon writings is very fluctuating, and it would be in vain to try to extract any rule of phonetic conformity from their remains. That profound scholar, Mr. Ellis, is able only to point out some of the more striking anomalies, which he can ascribe alone to scribal errors.

It was not until the dawn of Early English that we

have any example of the application of the purely phonetic principle to the orthography of our speech. Many of its forms had then become fixed and permanent; its variations and discordances were greatly reduced so that it was pervaded by three great dialects, that can be traced with certainty as belonging to the South, the Midland, and the North.

Dr. Richard Morris in his preface to the *Early Alliterative Poems*, affirms the existence of these three distinct forms of speech, or as they are sometimes designated, West Saxon, Mercian, and Northumbrian; and he observes that, "there is perhaps no better test for distinguishing these dialects from one another, than the verbal inflexions of the plural number in the present tense, indicative mode. To state this test in the briefest manner, we may say that the Southern dialect employs *eth*, the Midland, *en*, and the Northumbrian, *es*, as the inflexion for all persons of the plural." This rule can be illustrated by taking the plural of the verb, *to hope*, in the present indicative, as follows:

	Southern.	Midland.	Northumbrian.
1st per.—	<i>We hopeth</i>	<i>Hopen</i>	<i>Hopes</i>
2d per.—	<i>Ye hopeth</i>	<i>Hopen</i>	<i>Hopes</i>
3d per.—	<i>They hopeth</i>	<i>Hopen</i>	<i>Hopes</i>

Each of these idioms had a local character with its own prescriptive forms, and an observance of these niceties constituted the distinction between the writings of the respective localities, more than a compliance with any literary standard. Indeed, there was yet no general literary language recognized among authors, nor was it until after the introduction of the printing press, during the following century, that the Midland as spoken at

the universities and in London gained the ascendancy and became the universal language of English literature. Each writer naturally depended upon the dialect with which he was most familiar; but the scribes who subsequently copied his works not infrequently belonged to the domain of a different dialect, which they mixed up with that of the text, so that in manuscripts that have been subjected to this incongruous manipulation it is sometimes difficult to discriminate the one in which it was originally written. A series of perplexities have in this manner been bequeathed to the antiquarian who would pry into those ancient records. In fact, it requires unusual research and much patience to examine and decide upon a fair proportion of these anomalies.

The literary remains of Early English that have reached us are nearly all in the form of poetical compositions, many of them being translations from the French, and some from the Latin. It has often been noticed that poetry is the first accent of literature.

We learn from Aristotle that before the invention of letters the laws were set to music, and that among the ancient Greeks the same word was used to designate a song and a law. Solon, who was a poet as well as a legislator, wrote his treatise upon government in verse, as a supplement to his laws. Those of Lycurgus were left in both prose and verse, so that things apparently the most opposed were preserved in poetry. We know that among the Celts and Saxons the bards were the companions of princes, the counselors of kings; that they were admitted to their feasts, partook of their deliberations, and recalled them to the exercise of moderation and justice. They sang of love, glory, valor, and

were nearly the only teachers of popular morality. The ancient scalds of Scandinavia presided at all religious and sacred mysteries, related the adventures of the gods, and celebrated the achievements of their princes and heroes. All the Gothic tribes were imbued with a like reverence for their bards. They were almost divine persons among the Celts. Their curse was dreaded and their blessing implored. The songs of their ancestors were preserved in the memory of one generation of reciters after another. Indeed, we still refer back to this early poetry for a knowledge of the period when the North and the West of Europe were involved in barbarism. We are also aware that the Angles and Saxons, long before they pushed their predatory ravages across the German Ocean, had their war songs like other savage tribes, and there can scarcely be a doubt but that on their arrival under Hengist and Horsa they had an abundant supply of those who could sing the battles they might fight and the victories they expected to win. Even their greatest chieftains were proud of this accomplishment. Alfred the Great was a harper, and in that character gained admission to the Danish camp, where he acquired such knowledge of their condition as enabled him at a subsequent day to completely destroy them. The minstrel was a privileged character among the Normans, and he was usually an officer in their palaces. Indeed, heroic poems are the earliest monuments of Norman literature. While William the Bastard was only Duke of Normandy, not a few of his warriors were equally distinguished as *trouvères* as for martial deeds. One of these, named Taillefer, was permitted to begin the onset

at the battle of Hastings, and mounting his horse, he rushed with his comrades upon the English, singing the praises of Charlemagne and Roland. The same ancestral spirit animated the Normans after the conquest, and the minstrel art was raised to an eminence of polished regularity never before attained. A hundred years after that event, Richard Cœur de Lion, whose career is so full of romance, was himself a royal troubadour, and his constant companion and best friend was a minstrel. When the rhyming poets, like Layamon, began to write history, the minstrel was at the height of popularity. He was the joy of private life, and an honored guest at the gatherings of the people. He not only recited history and painted its passions, but he inspired a taste for domestic virtue among the humble and the powerless. It was in verse that he expressed counsels, consolations, or reproaches, as they were needed; and related the wonderful stories of adventure with "Giants and Dragons, and Witches and Enchanters," in which his simple-minded listeners thoroughly believed. When writing was resorted to, instead of singing, it is not surprising that verse was nearly the only medium used by those wishing to address the public in the new language, or in which to express their ideas and sentiments. Accordingly, we find the Brut of Layamon was in the form of a poem—the last strain in broken Saxon; while the first production in Early English is a striking example of the same metrical tendency—the Rhyming Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester. This latter is a history of England, having for its prototype the Brut of Layamon, introducing fables and legends quite as marvelous as those of the

old friar, not forgetting the wanderings of Æneas, and the settlement of the Trojans on the British shore. The difference in time between the two poems is about seventy years; but the English of the former has to be studied almost in the same manner as we study Greek or Latin, for without notes or translations we can but guess at its meaning; while the English of the Chronicle can be read with the occasional aid of the glossary.

The following description of England, by Robert of Gloucester, is considered an average specimen of his style:

In the contre of Canterbury mest plente of fysch ys,
 And mest chase aboute Salesburi of wylde bestes y wys,
 At London schippes mest, & wyn at Wyncestre,
 At Herford schep and orf, & fruyt at Wircestre,
 Sope aboute Couyntre, yrn at Gloucestre.
 Metel, as led and tin, in the contre of Excestre,
 Euerwik of fairest wood, Lyncolne of fayrest men,
 Grantebrugge and Hontyndone mest plente of dup fen,
 Ely of fairest place, of fairest sigte Roucestre,
 Euene ageyn Franncce stond the contre of Chichestre,
 Norwiche ageyn Denemarc, Chestre ageyn Yelond,
 Duram ageyn Norwei, as ich onderstonde,
 Three wondres ther beth in Engolonde, none more y, not
 That water of Bath ys that on, that euer ys yliche hot. . .
 Upon the pleyn of Salesbury that other wonder ys,
 That Stonhyngel ys yclepud, no more wonder nys
 * * * * The thirddde wonder ys
 Up the hul of the pek, north wynd ther y wys,
 Out of the erthe oft cometh, of holes as yt were,
 And bloweth vp of thilke holes, so that yt wolde a rere,
 And bere vp grete clothes, gef heo were ther ney,
 And blowe hem here and there vpon the lofte on hey.

(English Language, Marsh, p. 232.)

At least twelve per cent. of the words in Layamon are obsolete; but this is a common source of embarrass-

ment in all ancient authors, and even in Shakespeare the loss is considerable; while the alteration in their meaning requires a distinction to be made in a still larger number, for words are seldom permitted to remain at rest, and our language has allowed great scope for changing their orthography and signification. Thus, in Layamon the words look like those of an unknown tongue, while in the Chronicle of Gloucester they assume a somewhat familiar aspect. The language of the Chronicle is also enriched by an infusion of Romance words. The verse of the former is as rough as if it were prose, and the orthography is so unsteady that the pronunciation is impossible by any phonetic standard. The intermixture of the French in the latter, being estimated at four or five per cent., and the mere vestiges of Anglo-Saxon inflexions which remain show how great a displacement the old tongue had suffered.

Robert of Gloucester expresses the genitive case by what we call the possessive 's, as "Engelonde's ende," "Monne's blod." For the singular and plural of nouns he uses *s*, *es*, and *en*. The comparison of adjectives is found in *er* and *est*, as *fayr*, *fairest*, dropping the old forms of gender and number. The use of the definite article, *the*, is invariable throughout to distinguish particular objects with precision, as, "*the* pleyn of Salesbury"; "*the* contre of Canterbury." The case endings are mostly dropped out, and their appearance is only exceptional; prepositions are introduced to denote the relations that the genitive, dative, accusative, and ablative expressed in the Anglo-Saxon and Latin.

There is a difficulty inherent in pointing out the dependence of time, place, and manner by a great vari-

ety of terminations; and in admitting the free use of prepositions and auxiliaries in their stead, the language is much simplified; and if thereby it has lost anything in flexibility, it has probably gained a distinctness in punctuating the object, or the idea intended to be expressed. These inflexional changes entered into the structure of Early English, and are of vital importance to the language.

The changes that had gradually taken place during this interval of seventy years are conspicuous. The Semi-Saxon of Layamon and the Early English of Robert of Gloucester, are as dissimilar from each other as any two dialects can well be that have the same remote original. This difference consists largely in the matter of orthography, and we perceive in the latter a tendency to the modern standard. The permanent form of the definite article and its separation from the accidents of person, number, and gender; the substitution of a final *s* for all forms of plural nouns; the emancipation of pronouns from their Anglo-Saxon fetters, and of adjectives from all forms of declension except those of comparison; some important changes in the verb and the participle, and the application of gender to the real or natural sex, mark the difference between the two periods in the development of our language. The process has been compared by an eminent writer (Keane) to that which exists between the operation of taking down an old, tottering edifice and that of renewing it. Semi-Saxon corresponds to the process of breaking up; the period we have now reached (Early English) that of rebuilding. These have, therefore, been called respectively periods of dissolution and of reconstruction.

The first part of Gloucester's Chronicle is a recital of traditions, taken from the stupendous fabrication of Geoffroy of Monmouth, but in the latter part he describes his own observations during the reign of Edward I. (1272-1307), whose genius for government and war has never been surpassed by any English monarch. The work is, therefore, important, as it is probably the first attempt in Early English to develop a truthful narration of passing events. His style is simple and devoid of art. The time had not come when purity of language was considered the glory of literature, and authors felt themselves free to create such forms as they needed, and when these forms rendered what they had to say this was the only success to which they aspired.

Gloucester's style is dry, without ornament, figures, or pathos. There are no fine discriminations or judicious reflections, as in modern writings. Yet his Chronicle is valuable for its knowledge of English history, and as an exponent of our early philology. To the same author is ascribed a collection of the lives of the saints, but as it is essentially the same in its vocabulary no further illustration is necessary.

Another, and perhaps the last of these rhyming chronicles, of which Robert Manning was the author, appeared thirty years later (1338). He is usually called Robert of Brunne, probably from what he says of himself in the prologue :

Of Brunne I am, if any me blame
Robert Mannyng is my name.
In the thrid Edward's tyme was, I
When I wrote alle this story.

It will be seen from these four lines that the Anglicizing

process is apparent in nearly all the terms that compose them. He discards the complicated forms of the Anglo-Saxon personal pronoun in the singular number, for *I*, *me*, and *my*. The Saxon demonstrative was flexed by a grammatical vagary from *se* into *tham* and *there*, but in the last line it becomes *this*, as in modern English. Throughout his work he generally uses *they* in the nominative, and *their* in the possessive plural. In regard to the verb, in the third person singular of the present indicative, the verbal ending was *th* of his dialect (Northern), but Brunne employed a terminal *s*, so that *loveth* becomes *loves*. An illustration of this occurs in the same prologue, where he states that he will relate the history of England :

And fro Eneas tille Brutus tyme,
That kynde he *telles* in this ryme.

Now by eliding the letter *e* before the final *s* in *telles* we have a perfectly familiar word. These differences mark a distinguishing advance from Robert of Gloucester. It will also be seen in the last line that the strong verb, *write*, becomes *wrote* in the imperfect by a vowel change in the stem, and that the neuter verb, *to be*, appears in its present form of *am*, *is*, and *was*.

The genius of Robert of Brunne had not been perverted by the constant influence of Latin, although it had always been the language of the church, and he was a canon of the Gilbertine order. In his works are found a greater number of Romance words than in those of any previous author, yet there can be but little doubt of the fact that they had all entered into the people's dialect and had become inseparable from it. He seems to be inspired by a healthy national instinct, for he is

always attracted by the vernacular dialect, and charmed with the love of the common people. He writes only

But for the luf of symple men
That strange Inglis can not ken.

And he complains of a prevailing style of such "quainte Inglis, that many-one wate not what it is." This probably refers to a neo-Latin, neo-French kind of literature, that sprang up under the pen of the few schoolmen who still lingered in the traditions of their empty pedantry. It is, therefore, not improbable that Brunne imitated the popular dialect of his day, and that his words are only those which the people used to express their ideas in conversation. This is an excellent reason for the belief that Anglo-Norman was already an important element in ordinary speech, which would justify the license of the poet in resorting to words in common usage.

According to Mr. Marsh, the rhyming history of Robert of Brunne is the last production in the stage of Early English, and there are philologists who consider him as the first in date who wrote well-defined English. However this may be, his English is not so clear now that he who runs may read; yet his devotion in using his native tongue was an effective precursor of the enthusiasm with which it was cultivated in the following stage of its division, especially when Chaucer touched it for a moment with the Promethean fire of his genius.

His chronicle, like many other productions of the age, was a translation from the French in two parts. Like Layamon, he took the first part from the Brut of Wace, and the second from the Anglo-Norman chronicle of Peter de Langtoft (1307). He enlarged it a good deal with original matter, and brought the narrative

down to the death of Edward the First (1307). It has been published twice, first in 1725, and again in 1810. It is thought by many that his style is superior to that of his master, Robert of Gloucester; but it owes as little to imagination as that of the previous chronicle. He never rises above a description of details, and exercises no perception of the impersonality that belongs to moral life, or the sentiments that spring up from the intimate feelings of the soul. We shall, however, come to this idealism before another century passes away.

“There’s a midnight darkness changing into grey,
Men of thought, men of action, clear the way.”

Among the works of Manning is one at the head of which he places the cheerless title, “Handlyng Synne,” an awful menace to the wicked. He began his translation in 1303. The work was composed in French by an English priest named William of Waddington. Perhaps he had no other ambition than to render his model into current English; but he was more of a poet himself than to be a simple interpreter, and he put the mark of his own genius upon the work. He omits whole passages and substitutes verses of his own invention, making it richer in narrations and episodes taken from ordinary life. He is condemned by some historians of English literature for his simplicity and want of imagination; but we ought to bear in mind that he wrote for the multitude that which they could comprehend and remember. We are not permitted to treat his work according to the rules of ordinary criticism, for aside from literary merit we must take into account the effects which his writings produced and still produce upon the English language. It is remarkable that Manning,

notwithstanding his homely style, seems to command greater respect, after an eclipse of more than five centuries, than any other writer of his age. Such is the judgment of Mr. Oliphant, who has made Early English a profound study, and who affirms that Manning was the first to stem the Anglo-Norman tide that was rapidly sweeping away large portions of the old vocabulary.

Alterations occur in all languages, and they often serve the purposes or the taste of authors. The ancient forms were giving way before a torrent of innovation. The purity and abundance of Anglo-Saxon terms were losing ground, and writers became free to replace them by pilgrim words from beyond the channel. The genius of our language in assimilating words from many sources besides the French and Latin, has augmented the richness of our tongue, and has been a marked feature in all the great ages of our literature. It is not true, however, that we can safely reject our own expressive rudiments and seek to supply them by words of foreign origin. This was the danger in the days of Manning, and he set the example of appropriating only such ample and majestic terms from the Norman as were already naturalized, and such as were interchangeable with those inherited from the old German stock. He had neither the leisure nor the taste to compose heroic pieces for the delight and praise of the higher ranks. His pieces were destined for the edification and pleasure of the people, and they were uniformly composed in the vernacular, and he found it, as we still find it, ample enough to express with correctness and clearness the operations of the mind as well as the

emotions of the heart. In *Handlynge Synne*, about ten words in a hundred are of French and Latin origin. Here is a passage from the beginning of the book just described, which gives an idea of the man, where he has lived and labored, and the exact year of the work :

To alle Crystyn men undir sunne,
 And to gode men of Brunne,
 And speciali all bi name
 The felanshepe of Symthryngame,
 Robert of Brunne greteth you
 In al gudenesse that may to prow.
 Of Brymwahe yn Kestevene
 Syxe myle besyde Sympryngham evene
 Y dwellede yn the pryorye
 Fyftene yere yn companye.

Dane Felyp was mayster that tyme
 That I began thys Englyssh ryme,
 The yeres of grace fyl than to be
 A thousynd and thre hundrede and thre,
 In that tyme turnede y thys
 On Englyhsshe tung out of Frankys,
 Of a boke as y fonde ynne ;
 Men clepyn the boke "*Handlynge Synne*."

The *Cursor Mundi*, or *Course of the World*, belongs to the Early English period. It extends to 29,546 lines in rhyme, describing the making of the world and the Bible stories from Noah downward. It is in the Northern dialect, and presents many pleasing specimens of versification. Perhaps a still earlier version of the Old Testament is the story of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, in 4165 verses of eight syllables each, rhyming in couplets, but the metre admits of occasional lines of seven syllables. At the middle of the story the unknown author makes

the usual excuse for using the profane vernacular on a sacred subject. The poet says :

An her endede to ful, in wis
 ðe bocðe is hoten genesis
 ðe moyses ðury godes red
 Wrot for lefful soules ned.
 God schilde hise sowle fro helle bale
 ðe made it ðus on engel tale ;
 And he ðat ðise lettres wrot
 God him helpe welimot
 And berge is sowle fro forge & grot
 Of helle pine, cold & hot.

Which is translated by Mr. Morris, who edited the book for the Early English Text Society, into the following paraphrase :

And here ended completely
 The book which is called Genesis,
 Which Moses, through God's help,
 Wrote for precious souls' need.
 God shield his soul from hell bale
 Who made of this an English tale,
 And he that these letters wrote,
 May God help him blissfully
 And preserve his soul from sorrow and tears,
 Of hell pain, cold and hot.

The Genesis and Exodus is a variety of the Midland speech, and probably of that spoken in the eastern counties of England. The character, ð, which represents, *dh*, in the Anglo-Saxon alphabet, here stands for *th*; the plural of nouns is formed by adding *es* to the singular, and the names of inanimate objects are in the neuter gender. Adjectives and pronouns are still fet-

tered by the Anglo-Saxon declensions; but the regular verbs are regularly declined, as:

Singular.	Plural.
<i>I love</i>	<i>We loven</i>
<i>Thou lovest</i>	<i>You loven</i>
<i>He or she loveth</i>	<i>They loven</i>

Mr. Earle calls attention to the circumstance that it is in this poem that we find the rudimentary form of the auxiliary *shall* declined. Singular, *sal, salt*; plural, *sulen*, and the remarkable feature of *he* for the Anglo-Saxon *hi*, equivalent to the modern *they*.

The authors of the two works just mentioned are unknown, for they have left no name upon their works. We may, however, reasonably suppose that their language approached more closely to the ordinary speech of the people than did that of either history or romance. The Bible itself was denied to the masses in their own dialect; but the broad simplicity and universal utterances of Hebrew intelligence and inspiration were proffered them in writings such as these, not, to be sure, by the hand of divine inspiration, but by mere human genius in the form of poetic truth. It was from the Book of books that these authors drew their earnest thought, their profound convictions, their homely wisdom, and their marvelous self-restraint. They revealed, as it were, to the laity the marvels and graphic passages of the Scriptures; the creation of the angels, the rebellion of Satan, the fall of man, the shame of Eden; the story of Jacob and Esau, of Abraham and Joseph, of Solomon and David; the flight into Egypt, and the destruction of the doomed cities. So, also, the annals of the New Testament were manifested to the piety of the

age; such as feeding the multitude, walking on the waters, stilling the storm. The conversion of St. Paul, the temptation, and the crucifixion became in this way subjects of general intelligence, and raised the thoughts of men to the contemplation of superior and heavenly things. More from this sacred source than from any other these authors derived their inspirations. From the poetical and legendary passages of the Scriptures they drew the sublime episodes and the mystical shadows that became marvelously definite in their descriptions. They clearly display poetical talent. Says Sir Frederick Madden: "The delineation of the seasons, the sweetness of summer and the bitterness of winter; the awful tempest that preceded the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the sea storm occasioned by the wickedness of Jonas, are quite equal to any similar passage in much later poets."

A very great number of religious treatises were written during the 13th and 14th centuries, but perhaps the two just described are among the most valuable monuments of our language, as they were composed for the common and unlettered people, who knew no other tongue than that of their forefathers, and who clung tenaciously to it amidst all their trials and oppressions. But through this immense mass of English words there runs a small rill of Norman-French, amounting, perhaps, to four or five in the hundred. It is the beginning of that great stream which will commingle with its rival dialect, and ultimately unite with it in the common estuary of the English language.

I have already mentioned the *Ormulum*. It is very singularly composed in a Northern dialect, strongly

marked by a Danish origin. The practice of doubling the consonants has been referred to, and the studied regard of the author for uniformity in this repetition is remarkable. There is no rule of this kind in any other author, and no other has imitated the example. Whatever were his views, it is not necessary to conjecture, as the work has fallen into disrepute from the very fact that he probably thought would preserve it. He uses two consonants in the beginning and end of a word, and some writers have supposed they were placed at the end of a word to denote a short syllable or a long one, but it is not very clear which. As to the poem itself, it is a sort of paraphrase of portions of the Old Testament. It has been pronounced a fine composition aside from its consonantal affectations, and displays a good knowledge of the Danish element. We find Midland and Southern forms blending their softer vowel sounds with the harshness of the North. It is thought the author intended to conform the language to a general phonetic standard and to leave an example of it to the future; but if this were his hope it has not been realized, for of all his contemporaries he is the least regarded as an authority upon the state of the tongue at the time he wrote.

These three works represent the Northern and Midland dialects respectively. I next call attention to a production in the Southern dialect called "The Ayenbite of Inwit," which means *Again-bite of Conscience*, or Remorse. It is a translation by Dan Michel, of Northgate, of a French treatise, "*Le Somme des Vices et des Vertues*." It is filled with theological discussions, and among them is the problem of good and evil. Conscience sweeps over man's nature and obliges him in some

degree to bow to its authority. It restrains him from vice, quickens remorse, and often recalls to well-doing those who are insensible to the claims of virtue; and any person who is entirely wanting in this faculty is regarded as an imperfect instance of human nature.

But it is not with the dogmas of the author that we are now concerned, so much as with those peculiarities of his dialect which are not common to the other two. I suppose we have here a pretty clear view of the Kentish speech as it was written about 1340, the date of the treatise. The adverbs retain the older inflexions ending in *lick*, singular, and *licke*, plural. These endings in the Northumbrian were represented by *lic* (lik) and *ly*. To this we trace the adverbial form *likely*. *V* for *f*, *z* for *s*, *b* for *v*, and *o* for *a* are Southern. In the preterite of strong verbs *e* takes the place of *a*, as *brek*, Southern, for *brak*, Northern. The Southern has a great variety of pronominal forms, as *ha* for *he*; *hi*, *ho*, *heo*, *hire* for *she*; *hine* for *him*; *hi*, *hie*, *heo*, *hue* for *they*; *heo*, *here*, *hire*, *hore*, *heore*, *huere* for *their*; *hem*, *hom*, *heom*, *heam* for *them*; *his*, *hire*, *hs* for *her*; *ure* for *ours*; *eower* for *yours*. We derive our pronouns from the Northern dialect, in which these forms, or at least most of them, are unknown (E. E. T. S. edition, edited by Dr. Morris).

It will be observed from this summary that the adverbs are declined like nouns, and that the numbers and genders of pronouns in the oblique cases cannot be determined by their form, but must be traced back to their substantives. Of the three great dialects, it is generally conceded that the Northern had reached a grammatical structure not attained by those further south.

The same age that produced the Crusades and chivalry also produced mediæval saintship, or rather enlarged it into a central figure of society and religion. Indeed, there is a certain class of compositions over which Early English presides with jealous supremacy. These relate to the festivals of the church, Sunday lessons, the life of Christ, and the histories which describe the labors of the saints and celebrate their glory. Long before this period, Ælfric (A. D. 1008) tells of the saints revered in the Anglo-Saxon church, and contemporaneously with Shakespeare (1610) there appeared a collection of woman saints of "our Countrie of England," by an unknown author, in language quite as modern as that of the great dramatist. It would not be easy to give any conception of the immense number and variety of these rhyming legends and allegories, or of the interminable relations of miracles with which they abound. They are all stamped with the same religious character and the same marvelous accounts. The faithful visit the tomb of the martyr with tears of grief in their eyes, and depart with joy in their hearts. The possessed are delivered of evil spirits, the mother obtains health for her child, and the wife salvation for her husband. The private life of the saint is lost in the vast exuberance of his miraculous deeds. He heals the sick, and brings the dead back to life; he stamps his staff on the sands of the desert and a well of pure water flows forth. Many of the legends are as grotesque as if composed by Rabelais, and impregnate the verse with the air of burlesque. St. Lucy continued to preach after her throat was cut; Theophilus got back a deed of covenant he had made with the devil; the head of St.

Edmund spoke after it was cut off, and St. Bride blessed a glass of cold water and it became ale. Mediæval saintship was universal. They were the protectors of cities and large towns, and brought blessings upon the localities where their lives were celebrated. Every craft and profession had its patron saint, who was distinguished by popular festivals in his honor. On these occasions his legend was recited, and the mixture of history and fable in the native dialect delighted the rude simplicity of the times.

Now whatever we may think of the stage of civilization in which this phenomenon appeared, it would be difficult to overestimate how much we are indebted to these homely but popular histories for the preservation of our language. The art of composition in the vernacular was almost lost. French was the language of public documents. It was spoken in the court of the sovereign and in the courts of law, as well as by the lords of the soil and their retainers. But the class for whom these legends were written spoke English exclusively. The authors were learned, clear-headed churchmen, who wrote for the spiritual welfare of the humbler members in their own tongue; and I think it may be truly affirmed that they were most powerful auxiliaries in strengthening the popular language. They were composed in the terms in which the people thought, and spoke, and prayed, by men who were acquainted with the sensational expressions of the world. If their wisdom was occasionally dashed with grossness and puerility, let us remember that they were the dauntless friends of the poor, and the indefatigable writers of plain English in the early stage of our language, when no one outside

of the cloister would or dared to use its unmellowed forms.

There is a vast number of miscellaneous compositions, in the form of legends and homilies in the various dialects of the mother tongue, belonging to the period of which we have been speaking. I can only call attention to them in the briefest manner. A volume of "Early English Alliterative Poems" has been edited from a manuscript in the British Museum, by Richard Morris. They consist of three pieces. The first, called "The Pearl," is a dream of a lost child seen in heaven by its father; the second is a collection of Biblical stories, and the third is a paraphrase of the Book of Jonah. Upon examination of these pieces, it is found that the plural of nouns generally ends in *es*; that the names of inanimate things are in the neuter gender, the comparative ends in *er*, and the superlative in *est*, as in modern English. The auxiliary shall, is *schal*, *scholde* and *schuld*; and *wille* and *wolde* are getting ready for their present forms, while the neuter verb, *to be*, requires but little change to bring it to its current grammatical conjugation. The language is gradually working its way, so to speak, to the simplicity of our own syntax, in the accidents of number, gender, and case.

A writer who handled theological matters at this time was Richard Roll, known also as the Hermit of Hampole. If he was the author of all the treatises ascribed to him, his pen must have been the most prolific of the period. He crops out of his age as its most picturesque figure, by his reputation and eccentricities. At the age of nineteen he left Oxford, where he had

pursued his studies with great diligence, and returned home in a rapt and furious conviction of religious fervor. He persuaded his sister to meet him in a neighboring wood with two of her gowns, when, dispensing with his own clothes, he dressed himself in his sister's; and rushing abruptly away, left her in a state of amazement, exclaiming that her brother was mad. Next day he entered a church, joined in the singing, and then mounting the pulpit began preaching with a quickened spirit, that burst upon his astonished hearers in a noble strain of Saxon eloquence. Retiring to a cell or hut, he passed his time alone in reading, writing, and meditation. Here he uttered his prayers, experienced a wild and convulsive devotion, strove in the dust with groans and lamentations; and at intervals was visited with gleams of the beautiful visions that ecstatic tempers so often accredit to inspiration from on high. In speaking of himself in one of his Latin works, he says, "While this ardor burned sensibly, and with unspeakable sweetness, passed a half-year, three months, and some weeks, to the inflowing and perception of the celestial or spiritual tune, which pertains to the eternal hymn of praise and to the sweetness of unearthly melody; since it cannot be produced or heard save by those who have received it, and such must be cleansed and withdrawn from the world. And while I was in the same chapel I heard a sound as of those playing the psaltery, or, rather, of those singing above me. And while I addressed myself with all longing in prayer to the heavenly ones, I knew not how, I felt in myself a wondrous concord, and received a most delicious harmony from heaven, which

remained with me." And much more in the same vein.

The common people, who were superficial observers of a pure worship of the soul, were carried away with Hampole's contempt for terrestrial distinctions, and came at last to believe that he possessed in his own person the power of healing the sick and restoring the dead back to life. He acquired the fame of a hermit and the sanctity of a saint. His books were in Latin and also in the vernacular, but when he went forth from his retirement to preach, as he often did, his sermons were in the popular language with few words of foreign extraction. It is highly probable that his congregations were composed of the least informed and the best informed people in the neighborhood, for his fame was great, and perhaps it was increased from the fact that he was neither a priest nor a member of any religious order. It is to be borne in mind that a great change had taken place by the middle of the 14th century; a new language had been formed and generally accepted by every class. His sermons were therefore constructed to edify all, and they had the merit of being accepted and understood by all. Indeed, it is the Saxon character of our language that is still the most suitable to every congregation. Many of the modern preachers who have exercised the greatest influence, spoke almost entirely in pure Saxon derivatives. John Bunyan and Knox, John Wesley and Whitfield, used but few words from any other source, and that noble discourse of the great Dr. Channing upon the evidences of Christianity, is a monument to the simple majesty of Saxon English. The most difficult to please can find

no fault with it, nor the most unlettered misunderstand it.

The best known among Hampole's works is a poem called "The Prick of Conscience," supposed to be an English version of a Latin original. It is in the North-umbrian dialect and does not by any means sustain the reputation he enjoyed among his contemporaries. His treatise of "The Virtue of the Holy Name of Ihesu," affords, perhaps, a better specimen of the genuine style and diction of the Yorkshire Hermit:

This es the name þat es abowne all names; name altherbeyeste, withowttene whilke no man hopes hele (salvation). This name es in myn ere heuenly sowne, in my mouthe honyfull swetness. Therefore ne wondyre þofe I luf þat name the whilke gyffes comforthe to me in all angwys. I can noghte pray, I can noghte hafe mynde bot sowmnande the name of Ihesu. I sauyre noghte joye that with Ihesu es not mengede. Whare-so I be, whare-so I sytt, what-so I doo, the mynde of the sanoyre of the name of Ihesu departis noghte fra my mynde.

Besides these, a sequence of interesting specimens of a moral and religious character, in different dialects, have fortunately reached us, and they have been edited and collated with the original texts, and published with introductory notes and explanations, that are full of instruction and interest. The Proverbs of Hendying belong to this class, together with metrical versions of the Psalms; mass books in prose and verse, paternosters, creeds, hymns, short poems, devotional pieces, and homiletic treatises, constituting an immense body of Christian literature, that had passed out of sight and was almost forgotten until a few years ago.

Not the least extraordinary among the literary

remains of Early English, are the romances in verse and prose. They are usually divided into two kinds, those that are based upon fable, and those which contain a mixture of fable and history. In none of the first class of these stories is Early English more completely shown to us than in the various legends of King Arthur and his knights, and none are of more importance or more valuable, from the variety and terseness of their vocabulary. Only those who are acquainted with these grand old stories in their vernacular form, can fully appreciate their rich Teutonic dialect, their clear and simple English. The names of places, from Arthur's Seat at the Scottish capital, and from the Firth and the Clyde southward, and across the borders of Northumbria and Wales, besides many of the words themselves, are those most nearly related to old Cymric or Celtic speech; and it is therefore probable that these tales retain the substance and character of the pure Celtic traditions more completely than any of the versions of the French originals. The fable had, quite likely, been handed down orally by the Cymric bards, and for centuries had been told at the gatherings of the people, over many a fireside, in the glens and upon the hillsides, by sea strand and river bank, before Geoffroy of Monmouth moulded it into his classic verse. Indeed, that wonderful fabricator pretends that he derives his history from an old book brought from Armorica, in the language of that country, which he translated into Latin. We remember that the district of France, anciently known by that name but now called Brittany, was settled by a Celtic colony from England, when the latter was a Roman province, and was, therefore, connected with the Cymric races on

the island. This circumstance suggests a possibility of Geoffroy's literary treasure having come from that spot. But no such book has ever been discovered, and there can scarcely be a doubt but that it was a pure invention to give credit to his own work. He adopted the Celtic fragments of the story, and inspired their meager proportions in his poem, very much in the same way that James Macpherson has translated the poems of Ossian.

We can refer back to the period when the western countries of Europe and round south as far as Sicily, were peopled by the Celtic races. We know that within the historic period they were displaced from the eastern borders of England by the Gothic eruptions spreading from the North, and painted in terrible colors by the historians. Their wars with the Celtic islanders were waged to extermination. There was no blending of blood, no fusion of speech, except a few words of Celtic origin, and some Celtic roots that have been lengthened by the addition of letters and syllables, and some that have been shortened by taking them away. The inhabitants were driven to the interior, and all traces of their civilization obliterated. These terrible conflicts furnished themes for romancing pens, and for song and story. Arthur fought with superhuman strength, battle after battle, until his followers were slain and he himself "wondrously wounded." He gave his kingdom to the son of Cador, one of his mighty warriors, and then departed to the enchanted Isle of Avalon, where he was received by the "fairest of maidens."

The Arthur romances have continued to exercise an influence upon our language and literature ever since.

As early as the 12th century Walter Mapes wove into its tissue the story of the Holy Graal, which is doubtless founded upon the legend of Joseph of Arithmates with Sir Galahad, who is the only one of Arthur's knights to whose pure eyes the sacred symbol will reveal its form of glory. The story of the Round Table is another type of the Arthur cycle, with Sir Lancelot, the gentlest and most courteous of "knights in hall," the sternest and bravest in "press of battle." The "Morte d'Arthur," by Hugh of the Royal Palace (1440), is a grand specimen of Early English, a grand romance in highly spirited Saxon words. The alliterative metre is strongly marked in this poem. The manuscript volume from which it is edited contains several poems of the Arthur type, as well as many other pieces both in English and Latin. (No. 8, E. E. T. S.) A prose romance relating to the same legends was compiled about the same time, "Merlin, or the Early History of King Arthur." And among the latest of the series was a collection of these tales by Sir Thomas Malory in the latter part of the 15th century, which was one of the first books printed by Caxton, who was informed by the author that he took it out of certain French books and rendered it into English. Great poets from that day to this have given metrical versions of these delightful tales. Spenser adopted Prince Arthur as the guardian of every excellence, and even Milton at one time is said to have thought of him for the subject of an epic, which, however, he changed for "Paradise Lost." In his wondrous "Idylls of the King," which stands out beyond the whole mass of English verse, Tennyson, who moves the living lyre of England, has clothed the fable with

fresh beauty and in a poetic garment brilliant as the clustering blossoms of June. Indeed, Geoffroy of Monmouth set a strain in the life of humanity that is as fresh today as when he first touched it. The fable bears away the palm for stirring interest, and we can trace through all its extravagance the noble qualities and romantic character inherent in the Celtic race.

Among the many romances that were composed by the Norman poets previous to the 12th century, may be placed that of William of Palerne and the Werwolf. The word werwolf means a man changed by magical art into the temporary form of a wolf. A Sicilian prince named William when a child had an uncle who sought his life. The werwolf removed him from the danger and placed the child in his den, where he was discovered by a cowherd and carried to Rome. The Emperor adopts him, educates him. Of course the Emperor has a beautiful daughter, who becomes enamored of William. The latter is sent about his business. He goes in quest of adventure, fights combats, kills monsters, and conquers his own kingdom according to regulation romance style, and at last marries the beautiful princess. This poem was translated at the command of Sir Humphrey de Bohan about 1350, as is supposed, for amusement of the middle classes, to whom French was unknown. The versifier was not so particular as he might have been, for his work serves to show the shattered condition of English syntax. The use of the present tense for the past one not infrequently occurs, as *askes*, for *asked*, *arise* for *arose*, *bere* for *bore*; and the singular for plural nouns, in the instance of *daie* for *daies*, *dede* for *dedes*, *burgiye* for *burgeyes*. These

grammatical anomalies may have been authorized by usage, but they are known at present only among the illiterate classes in familiar conversation.

The Lay of Havelock the Dane is of a date not later than the end of the 13th century, and is probably to be ascribed to Robert of Gloucester. It is distinguished for peculiarities of spelling. For instance, the letter *h* is prefixed to words which are usually spelled without it, as *holde* for *old*, *hete* for *ate*, *Henglishe* for *English*, *hof* for *of*, and *has* for *as*. The mode of suppressing the *h* where it belongs, and sounding it where it does not belong, is still found among a large body of native Londoners, and in the fluctuations of speech, what was good English in the 14th century, has become vulgar in the 19th. Change of some kind will probably take place in our own language as time rolls on, and the English of Washington and London may yield to the fortune of words and perhaps be modified by the slang of the ignorant. The historical changes of language may be more or less rapid, but they take place at all times, and in all countries; and although the art of printing and the wide diffusion of books and newspapers are acting as a powerful barrier to arrest the fluctuations of human speech, those who come after us may wonder that our words were ever the spoken language of their ancestors. In Brooker's Scripture and Prayer Book Glossary, the number of words that have become obsolete since 1611 amount to 388, or nearly one fifteenth part of the whole number in the Bible.

I shall refer to only one more of these early romances. King Horn is a rhyming poem of about 1330. Each line has seven or eight syllables. The story is told

in Warton. It is held to be an English story, though translated from the French. Mr. Rawson, by whom it was edited, notices that the pronoun is not infrequently combined with the auxiliary verb, as *shultu* for *shalt thou*, *wiltu* for *wilt thou*. It is thought to be in the Midland dialect, because the plurals of the verbs are nearly all in *en*, the Midland form.

Of the romances in the Middle Ages founded on fable and history, perhaps that of Alexander the Great was *par excellence* the most famous. The traditions of that classic hero had been lost in Europe for several centuries, but were probably preserved in Asia, the theatre of his greatness, and brought back by the early Crusaders, embellished by oriental extravagance. It was an age in which the more extravagant a legend, the more it was enjoyed. Morgante overwhelmed armies with a sound from his bell, Roland called for assistance at Roncesvalles with his horn, at the distance of many leagues; gigantic Paladins traversed the earth, the high spirit of Orlando passed into a crystal phial, to be poured out again in drops that became mighty streams, and the haughty Angelique, who disdained Christian kings and warriors, was herself caught by the dark eyes of a Saracen page. All the wildness of heroic life, and the marvels which subvert nature, were disposed of to divert the curiosity, or to excite the wonder of that olden time. To this class belongs the story of Alexander, and it was translated into the vernacular from the French during the period of Early English. It was the original of the most celebrated translations in the various languages of Europe, and divided with the romances of King Arthur and Charlemagne

the honor of having delighted successive generations.

The English version does not attempt to render the poem into the same versification as in the original. One form was written in Latin hexameters, or lines of twelve syllables, which from that circumstance is called the Alexanderine metre. This is the classical form of the poem by Phillip Gautier, who wrote in the 12th century. Various poems on Alexander sprang up in France, and it is difficult to trace the English version to its true source. Mr. Marsh is unable to decide anything, except that it is probably a rendering from a French origin, with interpolations by the translator, that are probably original English compositions.

The English poem is of a more plastic structure than that of the one just mentioned; the lines being eight syllables and sometimes nine or ten. This irregularity is wanting in smoothness of style, but admits of an animation in the measure that makes up for its inferiority. It is interesting from its great mixture of Romance words without any attempt to Anglicize them. Its antiquated French is one of the peculiarities of its vocabulary. For example:

And they horses *anenaunt*
To hem Stalworthe and *asperaunt*.

It was in this intermingling of Norman with English that their fusion into one language commenced. The Norman was gradually modified by Robert of Gloucester and Robert of Brunne, and finally by Chaucer and his contemporaries, until it became one of the principal elements in our language. Such words as *glory*, *glorious*, *courtesy*, and *honor* are derived from the old Norman

words *glorie*, *glorius*, *curtesie*, *honor*, and not from their equivalents in modern French as is often supposed. These and many other words of the same origin have been standard English for five or six hundred years. It is observable, therefore, that the "Lyf of Alexander" is highly instructive in giving us a glimpse of how the Norman was first adopted into English.

We may also enumerate "The Geste Historiale of the Destruction of Troy" in this class. The story of "Troy divine" forms the subject of many of the principal romances of mediæval Europe. We have seen that Layamon in his "Brut," has taught us that the Britons are descendants from Trojans, and Wynntown claims the same illustrious pedigree for the bonny Scots. To add to the glory of the German name, the Trojans are described by the German poets as settling "far on the Rhine" and the Weser, and that Cæsar met the Franks and Saxons as kinsmen, for their ancestors came from "Troy, the ancient town." Joseph of Exceter wrote a Latin poem on the Trojan war, based upon the suspicious narratives of Dares and Dictys, and Benot de St. Maure added his "Geste de Troie." The "Recueil des Histoires de Troye" appears to have been the earliest book printed by the famous Caxton. The "Geste Historiale" was rendered into English from the "Historia Troiana" of Guido de Colounas, and extends to 13,800 lines. It is supposed by Morris to be of Midland dialect, but Wynntown, Sir Frederick Madden, and the Rev. George A. Patten, who edited the work from the manuscript in the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow, show very conclusively from internal evidence, and from the desperate Scotticisms that appear in almost every line,

that it is of Northern origin, and was probably the work of Hugh, the Scotch poet.

One of the most prominent features of the language represented by this book, is the dropping of all terminations. The adjectives show no inflexions for number or case; the genitive is used like our possessive; the adverbs end in *ly*; the participles frequently end in *ing*, *yng*, and the verbs are marked by great simplicity of inflexion, and, singularly, *for* is used instead of *to* for the infinite. Marks of gender and variations of meaning are often expressed by a combination of words, rather than by changes in the words themselves. This result is remarkable, and shows how much more the language had grown up in the North than in the dialects further South, by the middle of the 14th century. Indeed, at that time it was the grandest dialect for literature in the language. But owing to circumstances growing out of the War of the Roses, the revival of learning, and the invention of printing, the Midland obtained the preponderance and formed the basis of our modern speech. It superseded all other dialects as the language of books.

Among those who wrote in mediæval Latin, Roger Bacon (1214-1292) is the first in rank. His works, even today, impose respect and attract sympathy. He had the incomparable genius to see through the barren subtilities of the schoolmen who surrounded him, and to suggest the true method of philosophizing, that was elaborated by his great namesake three centuries later. He was a Franciscan, the rules of which order interdicted the use of pen, ink, and paper to its members; and the Pope's permission alone allowed him to write

what was in his mind. His *Opus Magnus*, or great work, his *Opus Minus*, or lesser work, and his *Opus Tertium*, or third work, followed each other in the next fifteen months. He seemed to work hastily, as if he feared the papal dispensation might be rescinded. It is said that a more compendious exposition of the accumulated knowledge of mankind at any particular time, had not appeared since Aristotle astonished the world with his prodigies of learning.

About the same time Henry Bracton wrote a Latin treatise upon the laws and customs of England, which was the first attempt at the elucidation of legal principles as the foundation of municipal law in England. Duns Scotus, called by his pupils the subtle doctor, and William Occam, named by his followers the invincible doctor, wrote many volumes of logic, metaphysics, and theology in Latin, that were neither classical nor attractive. Several other authors, in fields more circumscribed, battered away at the fantastic problems of the Middle Ages, whose works are now but little known. Some of their speculations prevail in modern philosophy. For instance, Duns Scotus maintained with a matter of two hundred arguments the Immaculate Conception. This dogma we have seen revived in the text of an Encyclical recently promulgated by the court of Rome. He also held that the mind was indivisible, and that the faculties are not distinguishable from each other. This doctrine is now pretty generally adopted, except by the phrenologists. They resorted to the Latin in order to bring their writings to the knowledge of a public more numerous and extended than they could find in their native tongue. Even after the modern languages had

been perfected the same practice prevailed. It was in Latin that the great masters of thought wrote their most important works, such as Bacon and Hobbs, Spinoza and Leibnitz, Milton and Fénelon.

The special feature of these literary antiquities that has relation to our subject, is the great number of words we inherit from them. These theological controversialists coined many expressive vocables, and invented a terminology for their peculiar mode of reasoning. Mr. Trench is of opinion that we little guess how many of the most familiar words we employ or misemploy, have thus descended to us. *Real, virtual, entity, nonentity, equivocation*, with many more unknown to classical Latin, but which now have become almost necessities, were first coined by the schoolmen, and passed over from them into the language of those interested in their speculations, and have gradually filtered through the successive strata of society till now they have reached, some of them, to quite the lowest.

But to return to the English compositions. There were many, besides those mentioned, from popular French romances, which then, as now, furnished an inexhaustible supply of literary material; but enough have been considered to show the progressive changes and important characteristics that distinguished Early English from Semi-Saxon. I have mentioned only such works as I deem of the most permanent interest. It will scarcely be necessary to refer to those that offer but little to seize upon except dialectic peculiarities, or different orthographies, which would fail to enhance the utility of this enquiry. Matters of mere technical learning do not fall within the scope of this work.

The literary relics of early English display considerable uniformity in the art of composition, differences being confined to dialectic distinctions peculiar to the locality of the writer, to style in versification, and the working of French words into the mosaic of the English. They agree in many things. The same species of events are made prominent, the same interests dwelt upon, and the same kind of achievements extolled. The excusable mendacity of poetry converted history into fable, and compensated for the abuse by preserving it in our own language. Indeed, modern historians who write of that time, have to select their proper constituents from incidental sources, from neglected accounts which bear internal evidence of truth, from exhumed state papers, from mouldering parchments, from secret correspondence, from diplomatic remains, from national archives and cabinets, and from disinterred towns and cities.

It is, however, from the ancient chronicles, legends, and rhyming histories that we learn the progress of our tongue, and mark its slow advance from one period to that which succeeds. This is noticeable in the transition from Semi-Saxon to Early English. The definite article, *þe*, which had not lost its pronominal sense in the former period, had been gradually losing the old declension, *en*, *se*, *seo*, *þæt*, and became pretty well established in the latter period in the uninflected form of *the*, in both the plural and singular numbers; with the indefinite *a* and *an*, from the Anglo-Saxon numeral *one* as still used in Modern English. We also find that Early English deals largely in personal pronouns that are nearly the same as our own. *He*, *she*,

him, who, their, theirs, us, our, your, yours, we, they, her. And the relatives are *what, which, and that*, with antecedents of all genders, numbers, and cases. Instead of *hwas*, we now have *whose*. *It* is of modern invention. As we have seen, the pronoun sometimes formed the personal inflexion of the verb, and this was done by the addition of the pronoun to the root. To what extent this was practiced I am unable to say, but at the period of which we now speak the pronoun had assumed very generally an independent existence as a part of speech, though we meet with it as a part of the verb down to the time of Chaucer. The accurate distinctness of a sentence may depend upon the precision with which a pronoun can be traced back to an antecedent, and the most minute attention is necessary in their use. A composition in which the pronouns have no antecedents, or in which the relation is doubtful, may lead to important controversies and much loss and vexation.

Down to this period there had been an almost imperceptible tendency to drop the terminations required in the ancient declension of nouns. The plurals in *es* and *en* became common, and are still familiar forms in our language, and the grammatical gender fell into disuse, if it was not entirely forgotten. The case endings of the Anglo-Saxon had almost disappeared. The genitive singular in *es* still maintained its ground and is the precursor of our possessive. The present participle in *inge* took the place, in the Southern forms, of the older *ende, ande*, while the adjectival and adverbial phrases conformed to the Anglicizing changes, that were more or less rapid. The prepositions, which give such wonderful precision and accuracy to our speech, bestowed, as it

were, the finishing blow to the ancient inflexions, which had so long sustained the assault upon their existence. The perplexing mysteries and almost impenetrable signification of the case terminations, were working their way out of the practical use of the language, and every relation of case was coming to be expressed by monosyllables, that were employed in order to bind the words of sentences together so as to afford a clear and definite sense to those who heard or read.

Anything like regularity in the use of the verb was neither expected nor observed. It differed not only in the different dialects, but even in the same dialect. One tense is sometimes put for another, and the numbers seem to be badly mixed. Early English transmits the verb in a very shattered condition. The texts, however, of the period represent the beginning of a new and advanced stage, in which we plainly perceive that the language is settling down to a condition in which regularity is beginning to assert its authority.

CHAPTER V.

MIDDLE ENGLISH—1350-1550.

Historical Introduction to Middle English.

It is proposed to enter upon the consideration of Middle English without very strict regard to the arbitrary division of time by which it is frequently distinguished. This whole period is coincident with the progress of our language, from Early English to what is usually denominated Modern English, and, therefore, comes down to about the year 1550. I premise this account with a retrospect of some of the historical circumstances contemporaneous with its progress, and which particularly aided or retarded the development of the vernacular tongue. The condition and language of a people are so interdependent that the one often illustrates the other.

It is well known that the sentiment of national unity was one of the most distinct and notable symptoms that distinguished England from the period popularly called the Conquest. Even Celtic England was less Latinized than any of the Roman provinces in Europe, and notwithstanding its long subjugation to Roman rule, it preserved, more than any other nationality, its own original type, and was less mixed in blood and language than any other European race. They would neither yield their country nor their language to the Saxon

hordes who came from the low German lands to subdue them. The Saxon Conquest was, therefore, slow, and only succeeded by the extermination of the Celtic people and the destruction of all the monuments of their civilization. The Celts were Christianized; the Saxons were pagan and barbarous, and had brought with them their manners and their language; their conversion was not until a century and a half, and their language received no infusion of the Latin or French until the Norman Invasion. In fact, the Teutonic element is so strongly constituted today, that it is impossible to frame an English sentence out of Latin or other elements. It is pointed out that the Lord's Prayer contains sixty-five Saxon words out of sixty-nine; of the eighty-one words in Hamlet's monologue, but eighteen are taken from the Norman-French.

The Norman freebooters were from the same German stock as the Saxons. They had adopted the French language and manners from the people they conquered on the Continent; but we are at liberty to imagine that the Germanic sub-soil still subsisted in the race, in which the Anglo-Saxon seeds would spring up with singular vigor, as in their native earth. We can, therefore, comprehend that the aboriginal dialect of the two races should in the end predominate in their common speech, and that only a limited proportion of the French should become infused into the antique idiom which prevailed in the low Germanic countries, from which both Saxon and Norman descended.

We can also believe that the solidarity of a language is naturally more prompt and likely to occur in an insular nation, than in a continental state. Frontiers

marked by a river or a mountain present but little obstacle to the intercourse of the neighboring districts. When nations are divided by a barrier so narrow, they cultivate terms of intimacy, and a mixed dialect or patois springs up. The descendants of the Huguenots, who settled in Germany after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, speak both languages today, and the German and English colonists who settled Pennsylvania have, by intercourse, produced a patois called Pennsylvania Dutch. But when there is a separation so distinctly marked upon the map as the sea, it seems to isolate the people it surrounds, and we think of them as set apart from all others. This was soon illustrated on the British Isle, for in a century after the Conquest the Normans began to consider themselves as one people with the vanquished. Indeed, before the close of the 11th century, Henry I. united Norman and Saxon races by his marriage with Matilda, granddaughter of Edmund Ironsides, and one of the Saxon heirs to the throne (1100). The unity of the two races was also manifested by their common prejudice against followers who came across the Channel with Henry II. when he returned from his possessions in France. He was master of more than one third of that country. Normandy submitted to him; he obtained Maine and Anjou from his brother, and Nantes by descent. The dowry of his wife brought him seven provinces on the south. He annexed Brittany, inherited Lorraine, and claimed the County of Toulouse. His French dominions comprehended the whole Atlantic coast of France, and nearly all the lands bordering upon the Channel. His frequent presence in these provinces was indispensable, and on his return he

was accompanied by large numbers of persons, and even fresh arrivals from Normandy. These new-comers were regarded as foreigners, and the old Norman occupants, as well as the Saxons, cherished a common hatred for all the various hordes that came with the king on these occasions, to eat out their substance.

Indeed, we are assured in the Dialogue of the Exchequer, a document of the 12th century, that the fusion of the conquerors and the vanquished was so far accomplished, that it was nearly impossible to discover among freemen who was English and who was of Norman origin. The Saxons who retained their lands, and those who recovered them, were now occasionally admitted to the Great Council, to the privileges of knighthood, and to exercise the function of justices in the county and local courts. The same period was signalized by frequent marriages between the two races; while marriage with foreigners was looked upon as a disgrace. In the Great Charter it is ordained that heiresses should not be compelled to marry men not of the kingdom of England. Thus the national consciousness was amalgamating the diverse races into an insular people, and giving a special and energetic aid in developing a national language without a parallel upon the Continent. People of the same kindred adopt congenial habits and uniformity of speech.

The consolidation of territory has an immense influence upon the unification of language. During the 12th century English domain was completely incorporated. In the Anglo-Saxon period, certain tribes of invaders occupied a region more or less extended, and represented an ephemeral kingdom, but not a very dis-

tinct or permanent nationality; and few of them possessed a separate political existence with an historical record. The domain of Alfred comprehended not more than one fifth of England. The kings of the heptarchy were seven in number, and they exercised each a distinct sovereignty. They were uniting and separating, sometimes by marriage, sometimes by conquest, by contract, by inheritance, and always ready to attack each other according to the prospects of spoliation or territorial aggrandizement. Revolution, conquest, and fusion often swept away the barriers that separated them, until at last they were conquered *en masse* by the Normans, and the unification of all England was enforced by the iron heel of a military despotism that Britain had never before experienced. With the unification of the soil, that of the people and their language was only a question of time, and this condition had been so far reached after the lapse of a century and a half, that England entered under the dynasty of the Plantagenets into the great annals of European history with a distinct national system and language of its own.

Another circumstance that aided in bringing the people together, was the growth of the Common Law. We know that the Conqueror attempted to root out the Saxon language by the introduction of Norman-French; and that he also tried to suppress the Saxon laws by substituting those of Normandy in their place. He succeeded in neither of these schemes. A new language was formed from the unequal blending of the two idioms. We know that he established the Feudal Law of Tenures in order to displace the owners of the land and set up his vassals as the supporters of his usurpa-

tion. But from the great variety of laws and customs that prevailed in different parts of the country, which had descended from the customary laws of the Anglo-Saxon system, there sprang up gradually one uniform certain law, which thereby acquired the name of the Common Law, for the whole kingdom.

In the reign of Henry II. (1154 to 1189) local differences had nearly disappeared. In a society commencing the work of progress after the century of disorder that followed the Conquest, all races and classes had an interest in permanently settling their respective rights. To this king is due the honor of dividing England into six judicial circuits, through which he sent Justices in Eyre, or Circuit Judges, twice a year (1177). The jurisprudence developed in the periodical circuits through the whole country, finally embraced the whole circle of social relations, and served without an effort to produce uniformity. Thus, the Common Law became the same for all England. It was never imposed, because it was never resisted. It made its way without noise under the form of decrees and judicial precedents. Now a people having the same law will naturally grow into the use of the language in which it is expressed, and we can safely predict that it will be that of the nation. The English language is found today wherever the Common Law prevails, and it is observed that the same temperament of society is congenial to them both.

Events of a political character have also contributed powerfully to precipitate the fusion of races and classes. Magna Charta is perhaps the most important of these (June 16, 1215). The first grant of popular rights had, however, preceded this great law, for Henry I.,

upon his accession to the crown, confirmed all the laws of Edward the Confessor, and compiled them with other grants into one statute, to be kept in some public place in every county. This statute was confirmed and augmented from time to time by several of his successors; but these promises were constantly evaded by the detestable governments of the Norman and Plantagenet kings. In fact, England can scarcely be said to have been born until the Great Charter gave it birth. It was terrorized by these unbridled tyrants, who defied all authority, and for whom there was neither repression nor punishment. These evils culminated in a period of frightful anarchy during the reign of King John (1199-1216). The barons rallied from one end of the kingdom to the other in a national and popular movement. They had several times been drawn together by common grievances, and they now clearly saw again that their rights and interests required their mutual support, and the efforts that they made together were crowned by a victory in which the great men of the nation stood shoulder to shoulder with the humbler classes and secured guarantees in favor of the poor and powerless. Magna Charta would have been of but little importance and less value if it had provided for the safety and protection of the baronial classes only. It was a pledge given by each to all the others, in which the whole English people were united against oppression, and in which it was stipulated that justice requires all orders of men to be equally amenable to and equally punishable by the law; and that the Supreme Power is bound to provide for such equal distribution of justice to all members of society of whatever rank. Lord Brougham

in his essays on "Statesmen," refers to the fine observation of Chatham, that "those iron barons (for so I may call them when compared with the silken barons of modern days) were the guardians of the people; and three words of their barbarous Latin, *nullus liber homo*, are worth all the classics."

These principles did not, of course, effect a peaceful integration of the political system at once. There were many changes, advances, and retrogressions in practically working out the forms of self-government. But the great value of Magna Charta consists in having left the social elements to group and arrange themselves in new and phenomenal forms, and to bind all classes by a high and generous sentiment.

Another remarkable event took place while John was king. This was the separation of Normandy, and the loss of the other English possessions in France, about the dawn of the 13th century. The chief places in the church and state were no longer conferred upon favorites from that country, and the two races acted together more closely than ever.

In 1244 another event of scarcely less importance took place, and effectually put an end to all intermigration between the two countries. In that year, Louis IX. of France, and Henry III. of England, required their subjects mutually to abandon any lands which they owned in each other's dominions; and Henry, who was probably the most execrable tyrant of the age, confiscated at once every estate in his kingdom belonging to those who held under the crown of France. By the permanent breaking up of all connection with the Continent, the fate of early French was doomed.

For a period of one hundred and fifty years it had been the accepted medium of intercourse of the nobility and the court of England, but it had not succeeded in supplanting the speech of the masses. As we have already remarked, there is scarcely any trace of it in the Semi-Saxon authors, and it was not until Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle of the Kings of England that it was admitted at all as an element in the formation of the new language; nor was it until the appearance of the Canterbury Tales that any work was put forth with any very great infusion of its terms. When it ceased to be forced upon the country, the instinctive striving after new forms, so characteristic of our tongue, led to the adoption of many vigorous and euphonious Anglo-Norman terms, that added softness and style to Middle English. It is fair to presume that the Normans would now begin to use the speech of the people, and to intermix with it a portion of their own, and thus gradually and involuntarily introduce terms for which the primitive language had no analogue, or at least substitute those of the same sense to improve its vocabulary; so that the coalescence which proved impossible under compulsion, became spontaneous when left to the natural course of speech; and we know that generally the accretion of French words has entered into the structure of our language with singular grace and homogeneity.

Another circumstance that may properly be noticed in this connection, is the constitution of Parliament. In fact, it was the means of action that gave force to the union of classes. Parliament is the permanent organ by which the provisions of the Great Charter are perpetuated in the laws of a free people. At first the

king called around him the most distinguished of the barons, with prelates and judges, for consultation and advice upon matters of war, and upon raising subsidies. They composed the *magnum concilium*, or great council of the king, and were quite likely the rudiment of the regular Parliament. The knights, who held their lands directly from the king, were under the obligation of military service, but from an early period they showed a desire to remain upon their property, instead of following the king in his wars upon the Continent. Henry II. exonerated the whole class from that service upon their submitting to a tax for the exemption. The knights, gradually losing their military character and feudal rights, blended with the other free proprietors. The Saxons who had never lost their lands, and those who had recovered them, belonged to the same class, and all these began to form that great middle class, which was destined to acquire such preponderance in the state and the government, and whose united voice was heard in Parliament before the close of the 13th century.

In 1290 the Parliament enacted a statute that every freeman who did not hold his land from the crown, might sell all or a part of his property without the consent of the lord of the barony. He thus became an ordinary proprietor but little inferior to the baron himself. Many other abuses were remedied. Saxon serfdom had vanished, and Norman villenage, together with the fierce baronial contests, was scarcely known after the War of the Roses. The proprietors, squires, gentlemen, and knights found themselves associated in many important functions: sometimes administrative,

as the control of roads, bridges, prisoners, and police; the guardianship of parishes, the care of the poor, the collection of taxes, and preparing the lists of electors. Sometimes their duties were judicial, as sitting justices of the peace and as judges in the county courts and courts of sessions. In fact, they became an active and powerful body through their immense numbers and influence. And when the boroughs or municipal representation appeared as a completely independent branch of Parliament, by a division of the assembly into Lords and Commons, which took place in the early part of the 14th century, they made laws that were equally binding on king and subject, and as a necessary part of the legislature the Commons attained the exclusive right of initiating all taxes that were imposed upon the people, and resorted to this right as the best protection against the excesses of arbitrary power. They were recognized as the representative body of the people, and held complete control of the national finances. The government was already a constitutional monarchy, and the king's prerogatives were limited to such an extent that it was impossible for him to imprison or exile any person in his dominion. Due process of law was understood to mean that every man charged with an offense could be tried in a court of justice only, and according to judicial forms. In fact, the whole machinery of government and administration was settling down to all the responsible forms of civil institutions as we have them.

It was during this period that the printing press opened its influence to the wings of intelligence, and the mariner's compass had already opened all regions of the earth

to exploration and settlement. There was no spot too distant or too obscure for man's energies, and no kind of knowledge too high for him to grasp. The surface of the globe and the vault of the heavens were hereafter to be the scenes of his wonderful discoveries, and the glory of his intellect was to shine in his poetry and literature.

The course of events had been of a most extraordinary character; the nation had acquired established form, and had demonstrated its power on the Continent. As we have seen, it was a great deal on the Continent, and displayed its power and valor on more than one field and in more than one mode of action. After the Great Charter had been forced from John and confirmed by Edward III., the people became more and more important, and at last controlled the resources of the country, and again and again resisted the encroachments of the king upon the rights guaranteed by Magna Charta. The time had come when the people felt their own power in the state, and exercised an influence upon the government that could not be pushed aside to gratify the wishes of the ruling classes. It was the good old plain English sense of justice asserting itself on many memorable occasions in tones of unmistakable meaning, demanding the equal right of all men to protection from unjust and unequal legislation. There is nothing so remarkable about this period as the idea then prevalent that the king was in point of fact to consult the people on great questions of war and peace, and to permit them to determine those questions for themselves.

Another circumstance which characterizes this period was the condition of men of letters. They were confined

altogether to the monastic orders, and with the exception of Mandeville, Langland, and Chaucer, there is scarcely a writer who was not a member of some religious body. The whole mass of literature was, therefore, of a devotional turn, with the exception of the "Bruce," by Barbour, who was also a churchman, but his poem was an historical epic. I refer, of course, to works of original composition, and not to the historical romances, which were mere translations or adaptations from the French, like the Brut of Layamon, or the various poems about Arthur and his knights. As yet no writer could support himself by his works, and, indeed, no author previous to the days of Dryden made a subsistence by his pen, and the attempt, even then, was almost a failure.

It was an age of considerable freedom of thought. Wickliffe was permitted to express his religious views and preach his heresies against the church, and was protected by the king. Mandeville wrote his travels and showed to his bigoted countrymen that some of the heathen nations he had visited led better lives than they did at home. Langland spoke of the abuses in church and state with the utmost license; and Chaucer, though a favorite at court, never sang their praises nor fawned upon their favor, but chose for his greatest work the occurrences and people of everyday life. It would seem from this circumstance that as early as the 14th century the people were a body whom it was safe to invest with the charms of poetry, and to be adopted as the theme of the highest and best literary work that had been produced in England. It is also remarkable as showing the growth of public opinion in the course of two centuries, from the time when the people were

regarded as serfs, or debased to the lowest stage of Norman vassalage.

Another circumstance affecting the early history of our language, is its sanction by legal enactment. We have heretofore adverted to the laws of William the Conqueror, requiring all public acts and judicial proceedings to be carried on in Norman-French; and Blackstone informs us that even the arguments of counsel and the decisions of the court were in the same "barbarous dialect." By a statute passed in the reign of Edward III. (1362), it was enacted that for the future all legal proceedings should be in the English tongue, and that the record only should be in Latin. The Norman lawyers did not, probably, restrict themselves to English; but it had gained a signal victory over the native language of the dominant race; and when the two idioms were at last concurrently used in the most important transactions, they would naturally break into each other and the points of differences gradually disappear, until their grammar and orthography assimilated in a universal dialect. It was like crushing the quartz to powder to secure its gold. Even the church did not escape the innovation, for it was further enacted that no priest should be eligible to promotion unless he could deliver his discourses in English, which extended all over the country. These laws had a general and permanent influence. The Norman-French had been generally the literary language of England for 300 years. The heroic poems and historical records were in French or Latin. But from this time the corruption of the former was complete, so that even Frenchmen regarded it as a degraded patois no longer fit for use, and the native

Norman writers began to apologize for its debasement.

Such is a partial sketch of the influences which led to the success of our mother tongue after the close of the Semi-Saxon and Early English periods, and it forms a suitable introduction to the next chronological division, which is usually recognized by philologists as Middle English. The former is assumed to come down to the middle of the 14th century, while the latter brings us down nearly to the birth of Queen Elizabeth.

CHAPTER VI.

MIDDLE ENGLISH—1350-1550.

1. Sir John Mandeville. His Travels. The First Attempt in Prose in Middle English. His Marvelous Stories. An Example of His Work and Extravagance. Great Number of French and Latin Words. Importance of Final *e* in Middle English. Uninflected Forms. His Broad and Generous Views.
2. The Scottish Dialect. Its Origin Framed by Scots, Saxons, Danes, Norwegians, and Normans. The Gaelic. Ossian. Introduction of French Idioms. Early Development of the Dialect.
3. John Barbour. His Bruce, the Earliest Epic in Our Language.
4. John Wickliffe. His Translation of the Bible. His Religious Views. Few of His Words Obsolete.

It is not, of course, possible to point out with certainty at what instant Early English ceased and Middle English took its place. The sequence in their order was so gradual that their confluence embraced writers of both periods. The Chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and Robert of Brunne are claimed by some linguists to be the first specimens of English as we understand it. However this may be, Middle English occupies the time from the first half of the 14th century to the middle of the 16th. The English language, like the English character, had worked out its long probation, and it was now ready for the moulding hands that were about to establish it permanently in a classical form.

The Travels of Sir John Mandeville was the first attempt at the description of foreign lands that had been made in England, and was probably the only book of travels that had been written since the works of Marco Polo, a hundred years before. It is quite likely that Mandeville had seen that book, as well as those of Plano Carpini and of Odericus, who had both been sent into the far East in the early part of the 13th century to convert the heathens to Christianity; and it is said that Sir John, who was in possession of Odericus's manuscript, embraced the observations of that writer in his own text, and made them the foundation of his fabulous narrative.

The book, which appeared in 1356, is a most stupendous attempt upon the credulity of mankind. It is scarcely possible he could have believed his own stories, or that he expected that any intelligent person would credit them.

Among the marvelous things he relates, is a desert where the men have two horns, and speak not, but grunt like "pygges." In another place he finds birds that speak as though they were men, and men that do not speak at all, but hiss like serpents; he also describes trees that bear meal, honey, and wine, and other trees whose fruits become birds, and he even saw women in the form of dragons, besides many other marvels, that surpass the legends of the saints, or the stories of Sinbad the Sailor. He contrived to discover an "Yle" (island) where the inhabitants live in an ideal state of happiness and perfection, quite equal to the condition of things in the Utopia or the Atlantis of Bacon. At the risk of being a little diffusive, I make an extract from his description of what he pretends to have seen in this

Eden of mankind. It will also exhibit about the first example of prose in Middle English.

"And bezonde that Yle is another Yle, gret and gode, and plentyfous, where that ben gode folk and trewe, and of gode lyvyng, afre hire Beleve, and of gode Feythe. And alle be it that thei ben not cristned, ne have no perfyte Lawe, zit natheles of kyndely Lawe, thei ben fulle of alle Vertue, and thei eschewen alle Vices and alle Malices and alle Synnes. For thei ben not proude, ne coveytous, ne envyous, ne wrathefulle, ne glotouns, ne leccherous; ne thei don to no man other wise than thei wolde that other men diden to hem; and in this poynt, thei fullefillen the 10 Commandementes of God; and thei zive no charge of Aveer ne of Ricchesse; and thei lye not, ne thei swere not, for non occasioun; but thei seyn symply, ze and nay. For thei seyn, He that swerethe will disceyve his Neyghbore; and therfore all that thei don, thei don it with outen Othe. And men clepen that Yle, the Yle of Bragman; and some men clepen it the Lond of Feythe. And thorgh that Lond rennethe a gret Ryvere, that is clept Thebe. And in generale, alle the men of tho Yles and of alle the Marches there abouten, ben more trewe than in any othere Contrees there abouten, and more righte fulle than othere, in all thinges. In that Yle is no Thief, ne Mordrere, ne comoun Woman, ne pore beggere, ne nevere was man slayn in that Contree. And thei ben so chast, and leden so gode lif, as tho thei weren religious men; and thei fasten alle dayes. And because thei ben so trewe and so rightfulle and so fulle of alle gode condiciouns, thei weren nevere greved with Tempestes, ne with Thondre, ne with Leyt, ne with Hayl, ne with Pestylence, ne with Werre, ne with Hungre, ne with non other tribulaccioun, as wee ben many tymes amonges us, for oure Synnes. Wherefore, it semethe wel, that God lovethem and is plesed with hire Creance, for hire gode Dedes. Thei beleven wel in God, that made alle thinges; and him thei worschipe. And thei preysen non erthely Ricchesse; and so thei ben alle right fulle. And thei lyven fulle ordynatly, and so sobrelly in Met and Drynk, that thei lyven right longe. And the most part of hem dyen with outen Syknesse, whan nature faylethem for elde."

The book was in three languages, for the reason, as

the author says, "And zee schulle undirstonde that I have put this Boke out of Latyn into Frensche, and translated it agen out of Frensche into Englyssche, that every man of my Nacioun may undirstonde it." Mr. Marsh, in his "Early Literature of the English Language," refers to a writer who, in speaking of the Mandeville manuscripts, affirms as follows: "I will undertake to say, that of no book, with the exception of the Scriptures, can more manuscripts be found of the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries." He related the miracles he had witnessed, and the marvels he had heard of from others, in the language that the common people could understand. The work, of course, was popular. But its popularity is significant of the progress of the language in passing from its early forms, for it is estimated that in this single book there is an addition of fourteen hundred French and Latin words to the vocabulary of previous writers, and nearly all of them are still retained; such, for instance, as *assembly*, *comprehend*, *conquer*, *survivor*, *excellent*, *frailty*, *inflame*, *moisten*, *nation*, *people*, *philosopher*, *plainly*, *proclaim*, *promise*, *pronounce*, *province*, *publish*, *reconcile*, *redress*, *subject*, *temporal*, *translate*, *trespasser*, *visit*, and hundreds of others equally useful, all of which were enrolled by Mandeville in our literature, and around which the new language became solidified. Whether this vast accession was made by a single writer may be a question. More likely the Romance element had been gradually making its way into the common speech of the people during the fifty years that had elapsed since the Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester commenced their more extensive use. It is a fair

deduction that the Anglo-Normans would resort to their native speech for many of their own terms, in respect of which the English had no analogue, and that Mandeville used only expressional modes that had become familiar in the colloquial discourse. There can be no doubt that the grasp and flexibility of our tongue were extended by the intermixture, and that its asperities were softened by idiomatic equivalents thus introduced into its general analysis; while its vocabulary was enriched for the triumphs of its literature.

The passage from Mandeville presents the appearance of the first Middle English prose, and we cannot fail to perceive its approximation to present forms. For instance, it contains a total of not less than 350 words, and 125 of these remain unchanged in meaning and even in orthography. Quite a number are the same, with the exception of a final *e*, as *longe*, *righte*. It was not the least extraordinary among the resources of Middle English, that it had the power of ascribing different meanings by means of this termination, so that attention to final *e* is of great importance. It was the sign of the dative case in nouns, and of the plural number in adjectives. It was the sign of the infinitive mood in verbs, and of the past participle in strong verbs. Strong verbs are so called because they form the past tense and perfect participle by an internal vowel change, as *write*, *wrote*. Weak verbs are so called because they go outside of the present to form the past tense and perfect participle, as *love*, *loved*, *rule*, *ruled*. The power of developing the verb by means of a terminal *e*, is quite extensive in this author. It is common in adverbs, as *aboute*, *above*, and in personal pronouns, as *oure*, *youre*,

hire, here. It is often pronounced as a distinct syllable, and Chaucer uses it for this purpose in his rhyming couplets. In time it was retrenched. Many other words present an equal likeness by dropping a letter or a syllable, and others have been moulded by rejecting the inflexions belonging to older forms. Indeed, the most striking circumstance in the language of Mandeville, is the uninflected forms of his words. In this respect he is far in advance of his predecessors, and even of his immediate contemporaries, not excepting Chaucer himself. The mode of expressing the relation of words in a sentence by terminations is almost totally neglected, and we have the words placed after each other as in Modern English. The parts of speech are the same as we now have them, and the numbers, genders, and cases are as near to our grammar as they can be, according to the orthography he adopts. The last is in the forms of Early English, which it is still difficult to read unless we have given some time to its study. It is somewhat remarkable that spelling is still the most difficult part of our speech, and our present forms will quite likely puzzle our descendants in four or five centuries, as we are puzzled by that which prevailed in the 14th century. The manner in which words are spelled never has depended upon the phonetic value of the letters composing them, and we may add that that of the 14th century not only differs from that of the 19th, but is in itself a peculiarity of its literature that can only be aided by glossaries and explanatory notes.

Mandeville undoubtedly intended to instruct his countrymen by an entertainment as delightful as the

tales of Arabian Nights. It was an age when the imagination was the best way to reach and inform the understanding. The mind of the people was occupied with the miraculous deeds of the saints and the supernatural wonders of magic and enchantment, and was fascinated with the wildest fictions of romance. He not unlikely thought that a dry detail would find but few who would read his book or care for its author, and he interspersed it liberally with fabulous descriptions. He has oft repeated descriptions of places where the inhabitants are of a disposition so highly cultivated in all kinds of virtue and happiness that they seem like beings of another race. Indeed, the whole book is free from the intolerance of his contemporaries. He sees virtues and goodness to admire in the many peoples whom he visited, and even compares some of them with those of Christian Europe, for their superior morals and character. In the instance of the Great Khan of Tartary, in whose service he was employed, he describes a prince of rare excellence, who, while adhering to his own religious rites, permits his subjects to receive instruction in the doctrines of Christianity, and to become converts if they please. There is no abuse of the nations which he visits, nor is there any lack of criticism in regard to their modes of life, but in all this he seems to have been actuated by a broad and liberal consideration of all he saw or heard. He illustrates the goodness of God to all his creatures. We read of nations the most remote and find that they all have the means of happiness, and are grateful to Him and worship Him under a great variety of forms, sometimes bending the knee, sometimes piercing the body, and sometimes enduring hunger and thirst

and even death, for the blessing and glory of heaven. There is no people so poor but that they have some idea of God, and some mode of worshiping Him. The most benighted worship Him and rear rude temples to his name. But all this is not enough; the mere belief in God is not sufficient. We must do God's work on earth and bless His children as He blesses them with His love and goodness.

The cultivation of our English tongue was not confined to England alone. Long before the days of Chaucer, the Lowland Scotch had exhibited several writers of great merit. The growth of the Scotch dialect was derived from the same Gothic basis as the English. Several dialects are known to have existed in England, and some of their intervariations are as dissimilar to each other as they are to the Scotch vernacular itself. It is even contended by several able writers that the latter had an origin long before the Norman Conquest, and that it had been introduced by a Gothic race directly from the North of Europe, and not as has been generally supposed by the Saxons coming into the country from England. Mr. Ellis is of opinion that the Scottish* language was separately formed from that of England, and that it owed its identity to its being constructed of similar materials, by similar gradations, and by nations in the same state of society. It is also claimed that Scandinavia was the original birth-place of the Picts, and that this remarkable race had, at an early day, planted itself upon the greater part of the country and established a Gothic form of speech long

*Dissertation on the origin of the Scottish language prefixed to Jamison's Dictionary History of Scottish Poetry, by Dr. David Irving.

before the Saxon change in England. Now, if it be true that the Picts were a Gothic race, it follows that their language was very different from that of the Celtic inhabitants, or else they must have forgotten their own language and adopted that of the aboriginal people. On the other hand, that the Scottish language is merely a dialect of the English, has been maintained as the most reasonable explanation of the controversy, by scholars like Dr. Geddes and Professor Murray.

The range of our historical knowledge of the period referred to has been considerably enlarged by the discovery and publication of certain ancient chronicles and laws of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and particularly by Dr. W. F. Skene's volumes upon "Celtic Scotland." These records, coming down to us from the 11th and 12th, and even some of them from an antiquity as far back as the 9th century, have shed much light upon the obscure annals of a period about which it was supposed there were no contemporaneous writings, and have modified previous views upon various subjects. The conclusion is that the Picts and Caledonians were a Gaelic people, ethnologically related to the Scoti, or inhabitants of Ireland, and that the same institutions and tongue prevailed with both races. In the beginning of the 6th century, and shortly after the Roman legions had withdrawn from the island, a large colony of the Scoti passed over to the west coast of North Britain, and settling in the more level parts ultimately gained permanent supremacy, and gave their name to the country. Meanwhile, the northern coasts were suffering the most terrible incursions from the piratical Dane and Norwegian, who desolated the country again and

again, as they had the shores of both France and England. These rovers of the sea finally created an earldom in Orkney Island, and also succeeded in making some permanent settlements in Caithness, Sutherland, and what is now the country of Argyle, where they formed communities of intermingled Saxons, Danes, and Norwegians. It is also certain that there were many causes besides those just mentioned instrumental in forming a language for the northern part of the island—one singularly idiomatic, with delicate shades of significance, with picturesque phrases, which were full of meaning to the Scots, but hardly intelligible to others. Its vowels have an extraordinary similarity to the broad sound of the vowels in all the cognate languages on the Continent. We know that throughout the various regions of English speech the vowels are pronounced quite different, as if it had not descended from the same almost forgotten original. It is difficult, if not almost impossible, to assert the period when this change first made its appearance, or to decide upon what grounds it was adopted. We agree, however, that the important features of the Scottish and English dialects are characteristic of Saxon and Gothic lineage, and that from the earliest dawn of letters, the native writers in both kingdoms used substantially the same vernacular, with the exception of isolated words or phrases that were peculiar to the North. The latter bore the designation of the *Ingliš of the Northern Lede*. Many other circumstances contributed to the same result. It is true that Northumbria at one period had the most cultured idiom in either kingdom, and that its literature and language reached from the Humber to the Firth of Forth. It was the language

of the Brut, of the Cursor Mundi, and of Hampole. It was peculiar and somewhat distinct, being the mother tongue of more than three fourths of the people from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, along the whole east coast of England, and the Lowlands of Scotland. From it is derived the vernacular of the Lowland Scotch, which we read in Sir Walter Scott's novels, and in the verse of Burns.

Gaelic had been the language of the country. The demarcations of race and language are not yet extinguished. In many parts of the Highlands the Gaelic is still spoken, especially on the indented shore of the West and the adjacent islands. A passionate attachment exists for the Celtic tongue, and it has been carried, like the household gods of the Gael, across every ocean and into every land where he has settled. From no other people could the wild and majestic songs of Ossian come. How marvelous are his pictures of grandeur and desolation. I shall give but one strain from their gloomy echo :

"I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fox looked out from the windows, the rank grass of the walls waved around her head. Raise the song of the morning, O Bards, over the land of the stranger, they have but now fallen before us, for one day we must fall. Here dost thou behold the wild son of the winged days. Thou lookest from thy tower today ; yet a few years and the blast from the destroyer comes. A wind howls in thy empty halls and whistles around thy half-worn shield ; let the blast of the destroyer come. We shall be remembered in our day."

Not more than a century elapsed after the Teutonic tribes had subjugated the southern portion of the British isle, when they carried their devastations into the southeastern districts of Scotland. They seized all the country between the Tweed and the Firth. As early as

the 7th century the dominion of the Angles was established over that whole region, and Eadwin, their king, erected the strong fortress of Eadwines-barb, which name was afterwards bestowed upon the Scottish metropolis. The kingdom of Northumbria was then the most powerful monarchy in Britain, extending from what is now the southern limit of Yorkshire to the Firth of Forth, and comprehending what are now the south-eastern counties of Scotland. That part of Northumbria north of the Tweed was called Lothian, and this territory, which had been ruled over alternately by English and Scotch monarchs, was finally ceded in the year 975 by Edgar, who had become King of all England, to Kenneth III., King of Scots, with the agreement that the latter should assist the former in repressing the disorders of his English subjects south of the Tweed; and upon the further condition that the country ceded should retain its own laws and customs, and its Angle or English language. This treaty was faithfully observed, and it was this English of Lothian that became the national language of Scotland, or as we now term it, the Lowland Scotch.

The international practice of *lifting* helped to swell the Saxon element upon the border. For instance, Malcolm the III., surnamed *Conmore*, in 1070 made a short and successful incursion into England, and returned home, says an English historian, leading captive such multitudes of young men and maidens that for many years they were to be found in every Scottish village, nay, even in every Scottish hovel. In those days raids upon cattle and herds are frequently mentioned, and we also learn that under Malcolm Conmore immense

numbers of young men and women were *lifted*, as well as cattle, from the counties of Northumberland and Westmoreland. As Cumberland had been ceded with Lothian to the King of the Scots, it was exempted from these terrible scourges.

There were also many exiles from England by expatriation. At the time, especially, of the Conquest, great numbers of the English Saxons took refuge in Scotland from the merciless oppressions of the victorious Normans. Many of the fugitives were of the best and wealthiest classes, and not a few were of the highest rank. Among them were the most illustrious friends of the Saxon dynasty. The unfortunate Edgar Atheling, heir of the Saxon line, with the royal family, found safety alone in the Northern kingdom—and accompanying him were several noblemen—to escape the sanguinary pursuit of Norman rapacity. They were all received with great favor, and Malcolm chose for his wife Margaret, the sister of Edgar, who after the latter, was the only survivor of her dynasty to the throne upon which William had seated himself the year before. From this intermarrying sprang a line of Scots-Saxon kings, who were educated in the Inglis of the Northern land, which became the language of their courts and nobles, and of the great majority of their subjects. The aboriginal tongue was confined to the Gaelic populations, who regarded the dynasty founded by Malcolm with a hatred that was cherished as the heirloom of successive generations.

To the diverse races of men who had settled in Scotland is also to be added the Normans, who soon after the Conquest established themselves in the strongholds

across the border, driven thence by the convulsions in England and the feudal iniquities of their princes. They were also attracted to Scotland by the liberal grants of lands belonging to the crown, for the Scottish King was anxious to promote the immigration of the Anglo-Normans with their arts and refinements into his own rude dominion in the North. These remarkable descendants from a Norse Viking had been at first the most daring adventurers, the most intrepid soldiers, and at last the most cultivated people on the Continent; and had gone through Europe sword in hand, penetrating the steppes of Russia, subjected provinces in the kingdom of Naples, had formed the imperial guard of Constantinople, had erected the most brilliant dukedoms in France, and in the middle of the 11th century had conquered England and seated their chieftain upon its throne. Scotland was, perhaps, the only country which they entered as unprotected pilgrims, and without the thirst of pillage or conquest. That they crossed the border in considerable numbers, is manifest from the fact that at the Battle of the Standard, fought in 1138, they formed the second line in the Scottish army, and were clothed from head to foot in armor of steel. After enumerating a multitude of families of Saxon, Anglo-Norman, and Flemish origin, who settled in every part of Scotland during the 12th century, the historian Chalmers adds: "Such were the men who governed Scotland throughout the Scots-Saxon period, who formed her constitution and administered her laws, who established her church and transmitted her authorities, who vindicated her rights and restored her independence."*

*Caledonia, Vol. I., p. 4, Chap. 1.

In a period of less than two centuries from the reign of Malcolm Conmore, these diverse races had almost completely assimilated into one homogeneous body. Constant intercourse and intermarriage had blended them so that the physical marks of the original types had softened the lines of distinction between the Saxon, the Dane, the Scandinavian, and the Norman. Even the mediæval characteristics of the Celts were gradually yielding to this moulding process. The Scots and Johnstons, of the South, the Campbells and Camerons, of the West, the Douglasses and Hamiltons, of the interior, and the Norman Lindsays, not less than the Celtic Macphersons, were found in all the ranks and orders of society, fitting into their places under a civil polity that recognized no distinction of classes, except those ordained by the constitution and laws. If they made war on each other it was, as the Earl of Douglass expressed it, to keep their hand in, in case a common enemy should turn up. English had become the vernacular of all classes. The Stuart kings wrote poetry in the Scots' dialect. It had, of course, such peculiarities as circumstances introduced, and which procured for it the appellation of the "Inglis of the Northern Lede." For instance, it abounded in Scandinavian words and sounds. A traveller in Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark mentions this remarkable circumstance:

"During my progress through this kingdom (Sweden), I could not avoid being struck with a surprising resemblance between the English and Swedish languages, not only in single words, but in whole phrases, so that a quick English ear may comprehend many expressions in common conversation. Among other instances of

this kind, I heard the postilions cry out, 'Come, let us go'—'let us see'—'stand still'—'hold your tongue'—'go on.' I naturally inquired their meaning of my interpreter, and found that they had the same signification as in our own language. They are for the most part pronounced more like the Scottish than the English accent; and indeed, in general, the Swedes appear to me as if they were talking broad Scotch."

This statement is accompanied with a foot-note, which I here reproduce :

"A Swedish gentleman of my acquaintance made the same remark during a tour in Scotland; that there was a much nearer resemblance between the Scotch and Swedish than between the Swedish and English, both in words and general pronunciation. The same gentleman also informed me that there are several obsolete Swedish words which are very common in Scotland."

Mr. Archdeacon Coxe, from whose travels the first of these citations is made, wrote in 1792, when perhaps the similarity was more obvious than at present; and it is not improbable that the further we carry our inquiries into former times, the more apparent will this affinity become.

It is also to be remembered that Scotland, being shut out from the southern part of the common island, naturally formed connections with the other kingdoms across the channel. Her intercourse with France, for example, introduced a large vocabulary of French words into the old dialect, which can yet be observed, like the half-effaced *fleur de lis* in Queen Mary's chapel. The Scottish clergy were generally educated at the University of Paris; the institution of the Scottish body-guard, and the settlement of Scots in France, and of the French in Scotland must have been the means of maintaining a

close and constant intercourse between the two countries, and inducing a diffusion of French words into the Scottish language; and, indeed, these words and phrases are so numerous that they fill a large quarto volume, published by Francisque Michel in 1872.

In contrasting the use of English, North and South, Sir Walter Scott observes:

“In England the only persons who ventured to use the native language of the country, were certain monkish annalists, who usually think it necessary to inform us that they descended to so degrading a task out of pure charity, lowliness of spirit, and love to the lewd men, meaning the lower classes, who could not understand the Latin of the cloister, or the Anglo-Norman of the court. Even when the language was gradually polished, and became fit for the minstrels, the indolence and taste of that race of poets induced them to prefer translating the Anglo-Norman and French romances, which had stood the test of years, to the more precarious and laborious task of original composition. * * * While the king and nobles of England were amused by tales of chivalry composed in the French or Romance language, those which were chanted in the court of Scotland must have been originally in Inglis. The English did not begin to translate these French poems till 1300, nor to compose original romances in their own language until, or near, a century later. But there is satisfactory evidence that long before this period several poets had already flourished in the court of Scotland.”

This statement prepares us to believe that the Northern dialect had become the cultured idiom of Scotch poets and literature while it was still depressed by Norman influences in the neighboring kingdom. Indeed, the fact has been noted by Mr. Weisse, that the English of the Scotch poets can be as readily understood as that of Chaucer, although they wrote at a prior period; and in proof of it, he cites the following lines from the poem

of John Barbour, written several years before the Canterbury Tales :

This was in midst of May,
When birdis sing on ilka spray,
Milland their notes with seemly soun
For softness of the sweet seasoun,
And leaves of the branchis spreads
And bloomis bright beside them breeds,
And fieldis strawed are with flowrs,
Well favored of their colours.

It is interesting to observe that there is scarcely a vestige of the Anglo-Saxon inflexions in this brief passage, and in their place we have pronouns, prepositions, and articles. It also shows the plural *s* extended to all nouns of whatever gender, and that the past participle is the same in form as it is today, and the rhymes are just like those in Modern English. Indeed, the whole passage could be rendered into Modern English by assimilating a very few of its words to our orthography.

The early development of the Northern dialect has been noticed by Mr. Murray in his learned treatise on the dialects of the Southern counties of Scotland, where he says that the grammatical revolution began in the 9th and 10th centuries, was completed in the North long before it had advanced to any extent in the South ; so that when the curtain rises over the Northern dialect in England, toward the close of the 13th century, and in Scotland nearly a hundred years later, the language had become as thoroughly uninflectional as the Modern English, while the sister dialect of the South retained, to a great extent, the noun, pronoun, and adjective declensions of the Anglo-Saxon. The same phenomenon of earlier development has been repeated in almost every subse-

quent change which the language has undergone. The South has been tenaciously conservative of old forms and usages. The North has inaugurated, often by centuries, nearly every one of those structural changes which have transformed the English of Alfred into English as it has been since the days of Shakespeare. Hence, of two contemporary writers, one Northern and the other Southern, the Englishman of today always feels the former the more modern, the nearer to him. *Cursor Mundi* and Barbour are indefinitely more intelligible to him than the Kentish *Ayenbite of Inwyt*.

The present mould that Lowland Scotch has assumed is derived as far back, perhaps, as the War of Independence, which gave to Scotland an undisputed nationality. That struggle is fertile with heroic deeds, furnishing inexhaustible materials for poetry and romancing pens. It is a grand historical picture, and the poets, as usual, have the first word. In the latter quarter of the 14th century it became the theme of the most remarkable poem that had, down to that time, appeared either North or South. John Barbour, of Aberdeen, a prelate of high dignity, was the author. As already mentioned, he produced it as early as 1375, under the title of "*The Bruce*." Chaucer was then, probably, engaged on his "*House of Fame*," or else he was still in Italy, and had not yet the dream of his *Canterbury Tales*. *The Bruce* is a copious repository of the achievements and life of Robert Bruce during the War of Independence. No accessory was wanting to the captivating subject, and the learned prelate laid down the crozier and seized the pen to celebrate the notable part his hero bore in that sanguinary contest. He paints the high character and

virtuous impulses of the valiant king, who, divested of selfish ambition, devoted his life to the rescue of his fellow countrymen from national and social inferiority, and whose only aim was the vindication of the kingly rights of the ancient stock from which he sprang, and the moral elevation of those who with himself partook in the natural heritage of life and personal happiness. Bruce is, therefore, the ideal King of Scotland, as Alfred was of England, holding the ægis of their wisdom and valor between the rights of their people and the usurpations and conquests that would enslave them, and in both cases leading their countrymen to victory and independence. I take the following lines from Mr. Craik's selections, page 162, in which the poet vindicates the generous sentiment of freedom, so deeply engraven on the human heart, a passage that has often been quoted as one of the finest tributes ever laid on the shrine of patriotism :

Ah ! freedom is a noble thing !
 Freedom mays¹ man to have liking² ;
 Freedom all solace to man gives.
 He lives at ease that freely lives !
 A noble heart may have nane ease,
 Ne elles nought that may him please,
 Giff freedom failye³ for free liking
 Is yarnit⁴ ower⁵ all other thing.
 Ne he that aye has livit free
 May nought knaw well the property⁶,
 The anger, na the wretched doom
 That is complit⁷ to foul thirldoom.
 But giff he had assayit it,
 Then all perquer⁸ he suld it wit⁹,
 And suld think freedom mair to prize
 Then all the gold in world that is.

1, makes ; 2, pleasure ; 3, fail ; 4, desired ; 5, over ; 6, condition of ; 7, attached to ; 8, exactly ; 9, know.

The Bruce still enjoys a very high degree of praise among students of Middle English, who analyze it for its harmonious flow and the rules of its metre and syntax, as well as for the distinguishing characteristics of its dialect and vocabulary. Mr. Craik says that the language of Barbour is quite as intelligible at the present day to an English reader as that of Chaucer, that the obsolete words and forms are not more numerous in the one writer than in the other; some are used in one that are not to be found in the other; and that the chief general distinction is the greater breadth given to the vowel sounds in the dialect of the Scottish poet. After comparing the two poets he adds, "But there is no other English poet down to a century and a half after their day who can be placed by the side of the one any more than of the other."

Barbour's Bruce derives its importance from the fact that it is probably the earliest epic in our language. As before remarked, history presents itself first in poetry. Prose comes later, with its critical acumen, and details with minuteness the conditions of a period or the affairs and passions of successive generations. The Iliad and Odyssey are separated from Herodotus and Thucydides by nearly five centuries, and The Bruce came two centuries before Buchanan. It is not written in the dry, formal manner of the Rhyming Chronicles. Its many admirable verses, its magnanimous sentiments, its lofty patriotism, gave the poem great favor with his countrymen, while it describes the deeds and manners of their forefathers with epic force and delicacy. In speaking of this poem, Dr. Irving cites from Pinkerton

the following passage, which will close our remarks upon this subject :

“Here, indeed, the reader will find few of the graces of fine poetry, little of the Attic dress of the Muse, but here are life and spirit, and ease, and plain sense, and pictures of real manners, and perpetual incident, and entertainment. The language is remarkably good for the time, and far superior, in neatness and elegance, even to that of Gavin Douglass, who wrote more than a century after.”

It was about the same time, or perhaps a little later in the century, that a writer and scholar appeared in the person of the great reformer, Wickliffe. Among his many works stands preëminent his translation of the Bible (1380). It consisted of the books of the New Testament and a portion of the Old. He adopted the language of his mother tongue, and the diffusion of his work exerted an immense influence in establishing our rich and picturesque style of Scriptural phraseology. The translation seems to have been extensively copied, for circulation among the people, and the manuscripts are still very numerous. It is evident from a comparison that the style of this early translation was sanctioned, if not adopted, in the authorized version of 1611. Take, for example, the parallel passages in the account given by the evangelist, of Christ cleansing the leper :

Wickliffe.

Forsothe when Jhesus hadde comen doun fro the hil, many cumpanyes fole-widen hym. And loo ! a leprouse man cummyng worshipide hym, sayinge : Lord yif thou wolt, thou maist make me clene. And Jhesus hold-

Version of 1611.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped, saying : Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand

ynge forthe the hond, touchide hym, sayinge: I wole; be thou maad clene. And anoon the lepre of hym was clensid. And Jhesus saith to hym: See, say thou to no man; but go, shewe thee to prestis, and offre that gifte that Moyses comaundide, into witnessing to hem.

and touched him, saying: I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him: See thou tell no man, but go thy way; shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

This is the only English translation that existed until Tyndale's, 150 years later. Other compositions soon followed that of Tyndale, such as Matthew's Bible in 1537, Cromwell's Bible in 1539, Cranmer's Bible in the same year, and the Genvan Bible in 1560. These translations were all based to a greater or less extent upon the Wickliffe rendering. Of course, in the period that elapsed from his production to the time of Tyndale, some progress is visible; but they all display the same pathos and simplicity which presided over the sacred dialect that he practiced, and which our language still guards with jealous care. Moreover, our Bible was born into our language amidst the fires of persecution. It was the first great reformatory movement in England, as Luther's Bible was in Germany at a subsequent period of 250 years. The life of Wickliffe was only saved because the king was his friend, and the prime minister stood by his side when summoned to account for his heresies against the church, just as Luther was so long afterwards placed for safety by the Elector of Saxony in the strong defences of Wartburg. But Tyndale, less fortunate, was burned at the stake; and bigotry became engrafted upon religious hatred, and uniformity to the requirements of ecclesiastical authority

was enforced with appalling vehemence. It was more dangerous in those days to translate the Bible into the language of the people, than it is now to translate it for the heathen. Even so liberal a man as Sir Thomas More considered Tyndale as the son of the devil in hell.

The religious views of Wickliffe were stern, but simple. He denied the infallibility of the Pope, and of Councils, and held the Scriptures to be the rule of doctrine and faith, and that priests had no power to absolve from sin; that external rites were matters of form, that religion was in the heart and soul, in the conscience and practice; and that the right of inquiry was conferred by God on all his children, and much more to the same effect. He gave currency to these views in several theological treatises, and finally completed his translation of the Bible for circulation among the common people. Our knowledge of historical facts sheds light upon the works of Wickliffe. He was an adventurous thinker, for he alone of his age proposed this creed so tolerant, and likewise containing the germ of enlarged religious liberty touching the most sacred rights of man. It was almost identical with the groundwork of the great Reformation in the 16th century. His followers were, at first, protected by many powerful personages, who envied the wealth of the church, and who, under an ostentatious parade of phrases about reform, and a sickly sentimentality of equivocal respect for the priesthood, desired nothing so much as to despoil them of their immense possessions. The Lollards, as the sect was called, increased in numbers and influence, but on the death of their leader, Wickliffe, a violent reaction befell them. It is calculated that during this

period not less than one hundred of their number were burned at the stake. In the intolerant spirit which prevailed, we find that every precept which claimed a higher source than human wisdom, instead of instilling the perfect harmony on earth claimed for them from above, was invoked in aid of oppressions that cried aloud to the ear of our common humanity. Whether a dialect consisting of prayers in the open air, or the chanting of sacred melodies outside the walls of a church by these grim, and, perhaps, sour-visaged votaries, rendered them justly odious and ridiculous, or not, the churchmen affected to think their vernacular, their manners, and their persons fair game for unmeasured derision and persecution. It is certain, however, that we cannot look back without horror at the gratified complacency of their persecutors, or the sanguinary measures taken by the church for their extirpation. Of course the Lollards were got rid of. The times were not ripe for the doctrines of Wickliffe; but the belief that had become fixed in so many earnest and austere minds weathered the storms, and moved the people of England for three centuries, like the billows of a storm, that finally burst in revolution and blood.

The citations from the New Testament already given are specimens of the whole of the Wickliffe manuscripts, as well as of the authorized version. The translation consists of six thousand words, and of these scarcely three hundred have become obsolete, or tend to obsolescence, since 1611, and it is throughout still perfectly intelligible; and it continues to affect us all by its uncommon beauty and marvelous English, and yet no book ever swarmed with such innumerable errata. The

author of the "Curiosities of Literature" has many examples of this extraordinary state of the English Bible. He thinks that these errata were, in a great part, voluntary commissions, passages interpolated, and meanings forged for certain purposes, sometimes with an intention to destroy all Scriptural authority by a confusion, or by an omission of texts—the whole was left open to the option or the malignity of editors, who, probably like certain ingenious wine merchants, contrived to accommodate "the waters of life" to their customer's peculiar taste. They had also a project of printing Bibles as cheaply and in a form as contracted as they possibly could for common circulation, that is, in epitomes and abridgments, so that they proceeded till they nearly ended by having no Bible at all.

Indeed, this extraordinary attempt on the English Bible began before the dethronement of Charles I., at a period when sectarianism ran the highest, and the volume was hourly in request for the decision of all questions, civil as well as religious. Even those who were dignified with the title of His Majesty's Printers were among these manufacturers, for we have an account of a scandalous omission by them of the important negative in the seventh commandment, making this precept read, "Thou shalt do so and so," instead of "Thou shalt *not* do so and so."

The learned Usher, one day hastening to preach at Paul's Cross, entered the shop of one of the stationers, as booksellers were then called, and, inquiring for a Bible of the London Edition, when he came to look for his text, to his horror and astonishment he discovered that the verse was omitted from the Bible.

Another source of adulteration and corruption of the text sprang from the competition of speculators, who printed Bibles in Holland in the English language, and with most extraordinary variations from the inspired phraseology. They were printed in the duodecimo form, and occasionally were seized as contraband and destroyed. Upon one occasion an invoice of 12,000 of these Dutch-English Bibles were seized as contraband. At another, a large impression was burned by order of the Assembly of Divines for these errors: Gen. xxxvi. 21, because an ass was named instead of a mule; and in Ruth iv. 13, the word *corruption* was used instead of *conception*; and in Luke xxi. 23, the word *condemnation* was used instead of *redemption*. These errors were none of the printers, but, as a writer of the times expresses it, egregious blasphemies to sanction the creed of some new and half-hatched doctrine.

The Pearl Edition was an octavo volume, and contained the most memorable errata, of which the following are specimens: Romans vi. 13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of *righteousness* unto sin," for *unrighteousness*; First Corinthians vi. 9, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall *inherit* the kingdom of God," for shall *not inherit*.

In one of the editions of this same Bible, the author already quoted affirms that it contains six thousand faults, some of which were the offspring of ignorance and negligence, but others willful adulterations of the bread of eternal life.

CHAPTER VII.

MIDDLE ENGLISH—CONTINUED—1350-1550.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Chaucer. | 3. Latin and Anglo-Saxon Inflex- |
| 2. Langland. | ions. |

It was also during this period that a great poet arose who was not only the glory of the English language, but who placed his name in the transcendent list of the most inspired men of that age, where Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were his only companions. To this day his *Canterbury Tales* have lost nothing of their freshness and originality. Out of the consonantal forms of his native idiom, he created a language so simple, and at the same time expressive, and a metre so noble and flexible, that he carried it at once to a marvelous degree of perfection.

The progress of our literature is undoubtedly the product of instrumentalities that no individual influence could control, but if ever it could be said that any man had been the first to dispose of words with a justness and order required for the incomparable expression of emotion and thought, that man was beyond all others Geoffrey Chaucer. For two centuries many works had been put forth containing what may be called the rudiments of our language, and these compositions in our nascent tongue are now sought out by the philologist for the earliest terms of its youth. It was far otherwise with

Chaucer. He was cultivated from his cradle, and from his experience in the poetic art, as well as from his philological knowledge of French, Latin, and Italian literatures, he was able to seize the mysterious correspondence of language, and the subtle shades of meaning that distinguish words. With these advantages he combined the power of mellifluous rhymes, to excite pleasing impressions on the senses, and to awaken noble sentiments and trains of thought. He has by his superior force and grace given our language a classical stamp, which his popularity as a poet has confirmed. Even William Langland, the author of *Piers the Plowman*, who was his contemporary, adhered to old forms to such an extent that when that famous poem is compared with the *Canterbury Tales* it seems like going back to the days of primeval English. It is so archaic that Mr. Skeat, in his recent edition of that work, has accompanied it with a glossarial index containing nearly, if not quite, all the words in its verses, and explanatory notes that occupy about as much space as the original. The poems of Chaucer, written about the same time, have almost the appearance of a modern production; the inflexions are dropped, the syntax, though somewhat defective, is clearly good English, and the present use of the article is extensively, if not exclusively, introduced. There is a noble simplicity in the style and versification, that have ever since been called by his name, and are still often employed in our best poetry.

On the other hand, Langland has such an affectation of antiquated words and idioms that he represents a Semi-Saxon dialect rather than the improvements that had been made by one hundred years of

English use, and his remarkable preference for the alliterative style of the Anglo-Saxon poets interferes with the freedom that was then moulding our vernacular into modes of natural and easy expression. Nor is his reactionary influence confined to an arbitrary succession of words with the same beginning, but also to a constrained and unnatural order of language, which not infrequently produces an incongruity between the sentiments and the expressions that should convey them, and thus the general tenor of the verse becomes obscure and perplexed. Langland was a great satirist and a genius. If he was a churchman, he was much more an Englishman, and the church and the clergy are the special objects of his satire. He does not appear to have been in favor with the religious orders, for on all occasions he speaks of their luxury, sensuality, and pride, and laments their lack of knowledge in all things. He often reproaches them for their neglect of duty and their want of godliness. In no instance does he light up the somber picture with a gleam of sunshine. No good priest as in the *Canterbury Tales*, no sweet and cheerful face like that of Chaucer's Prioress, and no noble character like that of the Knight's tale in the same inimitable collection. All is severe and harsh. The men he describes are hard and selfish, and the women cold and unfeminine, except in the allegorical characters; but all the scenes are set in lines of bold relief and uncommon energy; yet the poem as a whole is an epitome of the bad side of the times, and the depravity of all classes in the community. It is not a pleasing picture to look at, it is not a pleasing poem to read. But with all these drawbacks, one thing stands clearly in the foreground ;

it is written in Saxon-English, which had then become a national language, and will hence take its place among the tongues of Europe. It is still difficult for us to read it, and still more difficult for us to pronounce it. How it sounded when uttered by the people for whom it was written, is a mystery which even Mr. Ellis has not undertaken to explain.

The most prominent institution in existence was the church, and the various orders connected with it. The latter were very numerous, and monks and nuns constituted no inconsiderable portion of the people. William, the author of the poem, was himself a *quasi*-member of some religious order, but his satire was principally directed against the ignorance, sloth, and evil practices of the various classes that infested the sacred offices of religion. The man was evidently penetrated with a profound sense of the prevailing weakness in church and state, and, seeing it from his point of view, he lays it bare to the scrutinizing eye of public reprobation. I do not know of a sterner exposition of the vices than is displayed in his visions. The allegory was at that time resorted to for the purpose of conveying moral instruction, and although it is a clumsy contrivance for any literary purpose, it is generally admitted to have been handled with great force by William concerning Piers the Plowman. There is no greater display of its capacity for poetical work than in this wonderful poem. "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Faery Queen" alone outrival it. The old Semi-Saxon was the source from which he drew his vocabulary. We have, therefore, Saxon alliteration and grammatical forms which were, in fact, dying out. The work abounds in the old inflex-

ions, which it is needless to go over again, and although it is admitted on all hands to be a graphic picture of the age, portraying its manners, its vices, and the various orders into which society was divided, it accomplished nothing for the language beyond showing that the native authors could write vigorously in their own tongue. Besides, there is about the work an air of honest indignation at the prevailing corruption that leaves no doubt of the truthfulness of his representations. The fact stands glaringly out that all the grades of society were demoralized, from the highest to the lowest, and the religious professions were, perhaps, the worst of all. It is a great historical picture, where the shadows are deeper than the background, and the light and shade are obscured by the dark and dismal clouds that overhang the landscape.

Fortunately, education and society contributed their influences in the development of Chaucer. His early years were employed in authorship. When quite a youth he wrote his first original poem, "The Court of Love." At the same time he was translating "The Roman of Rose," a metrical story in the French, of great current popularity. Another work ascribed to his youth was the translation of Boethius from the Latin on the consolations of philosophy, a book which Alfred the Great had translated five hundred years before into Anglo-Saxon. This process of verbal disintegration for the purpose of reconstructing the French and Latin versions into an English garb, exercised him in the use of language, and of substituting words for words, without the variation of sense that a translation generally betrays. It involved the use of two distinct

languages besides his own, and a knowledge of their syntactical construction, and a proper consideration of such words as are remarkably synonymous. No exercise could have prepared him as well for the task of forming his mother tongue from the different dialects that compose it, and for transforming it into clear and forcible English. The most marked productions of Chaucer as a poet, after his "Court of Love," were the "Assembly of Fowles, or the Parliament of Birds," in the form of a dream; next the "Complaint of the Black Knight," also in the form of a dream. They seem to have been written under the impulse of ideal conceptions of love, and in the midst of enthusiastic hopes, inspired by cheerful and passionate affection for his work. The structure of his verse is very harmonious, arranged in stanzas of seven lines, and of a peculiar metre, which seems to have been invented by himself, and which, therefore, bears his name. It was afterwards adopted by him in some of the Canterbury Tales; the "Clerk's Tale" and the poem of "Troilus and Cresseide" being fine examples of this stanza.

These early poems have affinities with the French style which pervaded the fashionable literature of the period. The sentiment of love was conventionalized by the *trouvères* and troubadours into an exact art, and the poets were supposed to excel in its rules. Courts of Love were convened to decide questions of love, as if Cupid fired his arrows by the rules of geometry. In seeking the ideal, they corrupted its delicacy by strained and unnatural sentiments. Insensible to the fine temperament which is penetrated with a religious admiration for its real beauty, the *trouvères* and troubadours

sang of love only for amusement. The natural and profound instincts of Chaucer raised him above this shallowness; nor did he resort to elegance of language to dissimulate habitual vices, or to affect sensibilities that are as far from truth as from genuine feeling. On the other hand, his views of life are thoroughly domestic and sacred, and he describes his women with the reverence and tenderness of a true and noble nature. There are two periods usually ascribed to Chaucer's works, those that were written under French influence being the first, and those belonging to the second period, commencing after his return from Italy in 1373, and after his other visits to that country, extending to 1381. It was then that a change came over the spirit of his dreams, as is claimed, and the French influence no longer predominates in his poetry. Professor Ten Brink has added a third period, that relates to the writings of his later life, when his genius had reached its fullest maturity and performed its most original work. It is, however, suggested that, after all, these distinctions are owing to the spontaneous growth of his mind more than to the immediate influence from the intellectual bias of foreign examples, and account for his originality as an author, and the wonderful beauty which vitalizes his effusions from first to last. However this may be, it is indisputable that, although Chaucer belonged to the race once dominant in England, he belonged more essentially to himself. He was as English in his thoughts and affections as the humblest peasant in the land, and in his works he was as English as those of Saxon blood, although he has transmitted to us many words from the ancient dialect of his Norman forefathers. It is esti-

mated that he introduced into his *Canterbury Tales* not less than two or three thousand words from the Norman-French, many of them being of Latin origin. Dr. Weisse gives a list of one hundred of these words, of which thirty-seven have been slightly changed in terminations, while sixty-three are now exactly the same in French and English as they were prior to the 14th century. And it is thought that a like investigation into the whole two or three thousand would tend to a similar result. Undoubtedly he was of Norman lineage, and was well read in the Norman-French literature, which at that time was probably the finest form of literary composition, and contained the historical romances that constituted the reading material of the English nobility. There was no mode of improving the English, except by going back to the rude forms of the 12th and 13th centuries, or by resorting to the Norman-French, then the most polished language of Europe. By inclination and taste, Chaucer adopted the latter from which to draw such words as he wanted, and for this he has been criticised from his own day to ours. But when we consider the age and the influences then at work, we must conclude that his choice was made with judgment, and the words he introduced were selected with taste.

We are at a loss to account for the manner in which he has been criticised for his use of Norman-French words. They are now of common occurrence, and we can scarcely conceive how we could spare them. They are found in all our dictionaries, and form no inconsiderable portion of our common talk. We speak in English, but it is composed of words taken from all the languages in the world, and it is astonishing that the

number of Norman-French words is not more numerous, for it was the language of the great bulk of Englishmen who had been educated either at home or in France. It was the language of the court, of the law, of the bar, of the bench, and of the nobility. The children were educated in French, and there must have been a large colloquial use of its terms among all classes. It is not, therefore, surprising that it was introduced into the forms of the English tongue at an early day, but it would be indeed surprising had it been otherwise. The remark that Anglo-Saxon is the basis of English is quite true, but at the same time it is equally true that the Norman-French formed a part of the material out of which it was constructed. The great number of French words now found in our language is owing to the fact that it is a very great benefit to have the power of naturalizing words from a language that has been so long cultivated by its authors and scholars, till it is probably one of the most perfect forms of speech since the days of Greece and Rome. Its vocabulary has been enriched with synonyms, and rendered fit for every form of expressing thought and conveying knowledge. All its forms of syntax have been wrought into a system of inflexion, the freest of all from the perplexing rules of those languages that express meaning by the ending of words instead of pointing out their relation by a preposition or an article, and the whole structure of the language is thus rendered simple and expressive. In the Greek and Roman tongues this was done by a system of inflexion by which the root of the word was added to a great number of endings, to vary the mood, tense, and time in the case of a verb; and in nouns the termina-

tions decided their case, number, and gender, while in adjectives the same form was observed, and the various conjugations and declensions constituted a species of limitation to grammatical rules that it usually took our school-boys several years to learn, and, indeed, not a few failed even then to acquire them. The French, which is an offshoot of the Latin, gradually relieved itself of this cumbersome method of construction and placed its words in the natural order of expression, connecting them by particles so as to express clearly the meaning of the writer or speaker by the logical arrangement of the sentence. We are not surprised, therefore, that the French was often preferred to the Anglo-Saxon, for the latter, on the other hand, had cultivated the inflected forms of speech to a most absurd extent. Its parts of speech were nearly all inflected, that is, the grammatical meaning of words was determined by the terminations, as in the classical tongues, only the Anglo-Saxon was much more complicated with forms and distinctions of various kinds. For instance: it had four declensions for nouns, two for adjectives and articles, and adverbs take the case endings of nouns, and each of these was again distinguished by peculiarities of being strong or weak, masculine, feminine or neuter, and the whole was burdened with a vowel system of great intricacy and euphonic changes, that could only be understood by those who made the language a long and profound study. With these disadvantages, it is a very extraordinary circumstance that the Anglo-Saxon was able to hold its ground against a rival so much its superior in simplicity and literary excellence. But when writers in Early English began to use their native tongue, the prejudice against the Nor-

man oppression had not died out, and they wrote for men who cared more for their vernacular than for the refinements of the ruling and oppressing race. They, however, used but few of the Saxon inflexions, and supplied their places with prepositions and other particles, after the manner of the Anglo-Norman. This process of discarding the old inflexions continued till Chaucer appeared, and the last vestiges of their existence still linger in his pages. Now, I repeat that it is really astonishing that the Norman could not infuse much more of his dialect into the language in its earliest stages, and that the Anglo-Saxon withstood so great a pressure, and survived the contest of centuries. We can only account for this phenomenon by supposing that the reforming hand of its great writers gradually emancipated it from the shackles of Anglo-Saxon inflexions, and set it free to contest the field with its great rival, which had cleared its grammar of a similar inheritance from its Latin original. Perhaps it was Chaucer who gave the finishing blow to this reform and reduced the uncouth English of Langland to a form almost classical in his flowing and graceful style.

Chaucer lived in a great age. It was the age of Petrarch, of Boccaccio, of Machiavelli; and Dante had but just finished his career. The world had taken a long step in advance, and had shown a wonderful indifference to mere military achievement. The court of Edward III., the king, was a very brilliant one, and grand state occasions were still held for the display of surpassing magnificence and feats at arms. All that was brave or beautiful gathered in the royal palace. Chaucer was

honored by the king; his kinsmen were in the highest places, and exercised the greatest influence. John of Gaunt was related to him by marriage, and the king's other son, Prince Lionel, who died when young, was his friend and companion. He rode in the king's retinue, and accompanied him in his war with France, when he was taken prisoner, but reached home in safety. He was a scholar by education, a poet by nature, and an Englishman by birth and feeling. His great work was the *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of prose and verse that relates the adventures of various persons, who represent most every class of society as it then existed, and every condition of life in which men and women were found. The collection begins with a Prologue, but the first of the *Tales* is that of the *Knight*, while the last one is *Persones Tale* in prose; the whole collection consists of twenty-four pieces, including the Prologue. The many editions of these delightful stories leave little or nothing to add to what has already been said by others. I may observe, however, that the character of the whole work is of a kind that brings us into direct contact with the period of our language when it had passed through the rude forms of its early appearance, and had taken on a gloss of refinement and polish that made it a suitable dialect for the poet or the scholar.

In 1373 Chaucer was first sent into Italy on the king's business. The mention made of this visit is very brief, but it is known that he was at Genoa and Florence, at Venice and Padua. At the latter place Petrarch, the greatest lyric poet of the age, was spending his last days. That he conversed with him is evident

from a passage in the Prologue to the *Clerk's Tale*, in which that personage is made to say,—

I wol you tell a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As proved by his wordes and his werk.
Fraunces Petrark, the laureaut poete,
Highte this clerk whos rethorike swete
Emlumined all Itaille of poetrie.

About the same time Boccaccio, in the sixty-second year of his age, and within two of his death, was in Florence,—

Along the banks, where smiling Arno sweeps,
Was modern luxury of commerce born,
And buried learning rose redeemed to a new morn.

He had bewitched and fascinated his countrymen by the interest of his stories and the beauty of his style. Many of the Chaucerian critics claim that the *Canterbury Tales* are imitations of the *Decameron*, and that some of them are Anglicized versions from the Italian, among others the story of Palamon and Arcite in the *Knight's Tale*.

Prompted by his own sympathies, he would naturally visit Rome, at that time the most extraordinary city in the world, where all the current ideas of the 14th century were exchanged by men of different countries, and of different habits, and who had probably nothing in common except the desire of knowledge and a love of the classical remains of antiquity; and where amateurs and artists, poets and orators, priests and scholars jostled each other in the centre of cultivated intelligence. To an influence so favorable to his talents, he may have

been greatly indebted for the style of his future works. He had written with success of his dreams and allegories, but in the Italian masters he found the delineation of life, of character, and of the living manners, and how men of human mould had loved and suffered. Instead of the fantasies of dreams, this literature offered the phases of humor, the contrasts of passion, of raillery, and the minute observation of passing realities. This presented a wider field for the practical genius of Chaucer than the contemporaneous literature of France, and he is, perhaps, henceforth indebted to Italian sources for his inspiration, and sometimes even for the plan of his tales. This influence increased until his visit to Italy in 1381. Dante died five years before Chaucer was born, but his lines were repeated everywhere, and his language had moulded the Italian tongue. Chaucer witnessed his fame, and heard his grand epics in the salons of the great, and in the popular dialects of the people. It is contended that his "House of Fame" is an imitation of the Divine Comedy. Morley thinks that his *Troilus and Cresseide* is a free version of Boccaccio's "Flostrato," and that two of the *Canterbury Tales* can be traced to the same source. It is easy to recognize a resemblance, and we often compare a book we are reading with one by a famous author.

Few works are entirely spontaneous; they are generated like the successive races of men, and the fittest survive as the germ of new inspirations. With men like Chaucer, the story is a mere incident, upon which they engraft their own individuality. They describe themselves in the ideal sense of what they would like to be, and without imitating its disorders or immorality, they

elevate the fable from the inexhaustible materials of their own imagination. In their passages of love and crime, of shame and glory, of transcendent virtue and surpassing cruelty, they reveal a scene of fascinating reality, which their own originality peoples with beings that resemble ourselves, and where an ideal destiny redresses and rewards their conduct. Their works stand in matchless relief among the actual pictures of the times in which they lived. The *Canterbury Tales* is the work of his last years, and was evidently prepared with more care and labor than his other poems. He was in the full maturity of his life, and left the work unfinished at his death. The idea of the work is very simple, like all those of true genius. It is to paint the life by which he was surrounded. A number of pilgrims meet accidentally at the Tabard tavern, in London, on their way to the shrine of Thomas à Becket, at Canterbury, and the poet is himself of the number. In the conversation which takes place, the host proposes that, in order to cheer the journey, each should relate a story on going, and another on returning, and he who told the best story should have his supper at the expense of the others. This being agreed to, the host is himself selected as the guide and judge of the various performances. This arrangement recalls the *Hundred Tales* in the *Decameron* of Boccaccio, which, he pretends, were related by a company of seven ladies and three gentlemen, in a beautiful garden in Florence, who had withdrawn to that safe retreat during the terrible plague of 1348-9. But in the English tales we observe none of the licentiousness which disfigures the Italian, except a few vulgarisms in the comic characters. There is only the

resemblance which results from a connected series of stories under a common title.

In the numerous histories of English literature, the Canterbury Tales have been so often described that they must be quite familiar to most people who read at all. They have found learned commentators in the philological scholars of England and the United States. They have been made special studies, and the Chaucerian literature forms no inconsiderable portion of modern erudition. They were read by Shakespeare, who drew from them several of his plots. Spenser cites Chaucer with delight, and Milton refers to him with affectionate respect; Dryden and Pope have rendered some of his pieces into Modern English. There has been a very remarkable revival of desire for Chaucer in our own day. His text has been corrected, glossaries and explanatory notes have given a full exposition of his works, more especially the Tales. There is a wonderful beauty flowing from his pen, and his universal sympathy makes him akin to us all. He softens the ordinary occurrences of life with the glow of fiction. The poet describes what he has seen, though the scene which he represents, and the characters he portrays, are the pure creations of his sportive fancy. Every line wears the air of truth. No landscape painting could be more picturesque than the opening lines to the Prologue. The various conversations of the pilgrims, so widely different in their temper, education, and ways of life, are precisely such as the persons composing the company would be most likely to express. Each character fits precisely into his place in the general design, as if it were a drama. The whole is varied in subject and

beauty. Each pilgrim is so distinct that he passes almost visibly before the eye, and stands out in salient contrast to all the others. The gallant *Knight* tells of noble deeds, delights in magnanimity, and is a union of courage and gentleness, telling his story as if he had stepped out of Homer's *Iliad*. There is also the *Nonnes Preestes Tale*, and that of the *Prioress*, with pretty manners, and sentimental withal, as would appear from the motto on her *broche*, *amor omnia vincit*. The *Wife of Bath* is shrewd, coarse, and merry, and even indelicate; and *Mine Host* of the *Tabard* is bluff and humorous. The proud monk and the humble parson alternate with the learning and poverty of the scholar. The tales of the *Miller*, the *Clerk*, the *Man of Laws*, the *Merchant*, the *Sompnour*, and the *Freres* are consistent throughout, and sit as fine examples of their state and class, while the rude and comic portraits of the inferior characters are so admirably contrasted with each other that they seem to belong to the life and history of the time of which they form a living picture. The whole is set off with his grand imagination, and his quaint and exquisite humor. Useful precepts are interspersed with wise suggestions, that proceed from the vital principle of his moral life. How he must have enjoyed his own quaint and ridiculous images, and we all along join in his mirth, as if we formed a part of the imaginary scene he so kindly delineates. He is of large and generous soul, warmed with the old Norman splendor, but without any trace of its carnivorous taste for blood. Living in a material age, he lifted himself above its grossness, and never debased his thoughts by playing the parasite of wealth or power. Sincere and affectionate, a lover and a poet,

he kept open the sources of wisdom and virtue to the last.

It is a remarkable circumstance that in all his larger poems he neither celebrates the king nor his nobles, nor does he speak of the achievements of warriors, or of men distinguished in civil affairs. Although belonging to the Royal Court, he was no courtier, but turned away from that accomplished atmosphere, and devoted his greatest work to descriptions of ordinary life and ordinary people. There is no attempt to gain favor by pandering to the ambition of power, nor to fawn upon those in high places. It would seem from this circumstance that as early as the 14th century the people were a body whom it was safe to invest with the charms of poetry, and to make of them a theme of the highest and best literary work that had been produced in England. It is a circumstance equally singular that this course of the poet excited no prejudice against him, nor did it affect the good will of the king, or of his court, for he was employed in public service, and enjoyed pensions of various kinds from the royal bounty to the last, and his best and most intimate friends were of the king's household. This is remarkable as showing the growth of public opinion in the course of centuries, from the time when the people were regarded as serfs, or debased to the lowest stage of Norman vassalage. Indeed, he took to the people like a brother. He knew their feelings and passions, and followed them to hostelry or shrine. His Tales are encyclopedian of their business, their opinions, and manner of life. He describes the ways of the merchant, the lawyer, the scholar, the monk, and the nun; of those in the kitchen, the shop,

or the field; of those who live by their wits or knavery; and his genial faculty lights all with a style at once varied and picturesque. His vivacity never lags. He treats of nature and man with unfailing abundance. Striking similes and novel incidents crowd the story. No phase of human life that does not reach and touch this grand old Chaucer. Five hundred years have not dimmed our sympathy and affection. He still delights us. The realm of fancy he evoked and peopled is yet fresh with the dews of Aurora; the air is sweet with flowers, and vocal with the song of birds, as the Tabard pilgrims pass on their way to the shrine at Canterbury.

Attention has been called to the lingual ingredients from the Norman-French in the writings of Robert of Gloucester and Sir John Mandeville; but Chaucer was a more accurate scholar and linguist than either. Besides he never ceased reading, and he appears to have analyzed everything he read, from the first to the last line. He said of himself: -

Wherefore to study and read I propose day by day.

Mine Host of the Tabard speaks of him as a man who looked upon the ground, as reticent of speech in his intercourse with his fellow pilgrims. In his "House of Fame" the labor and reckonings mentioned in the lines below as being so irksome, refer to his duties at the Custom House, where he has a government appointment:

For when thy labour doon al ys,
And hast ymade rekenynges,
Instid of reste and newe thynges,
Thou goost home to thy house anon,
And, also dombe as any stoon,

Thou sittest at another booke,
 Tyl fully dasewyd ys thy looke,
 And lyvest thus as an heremyte,
 Although thyn abstynence ys lyte.

Although these allusions are rather obscure, we can learn from them that his eye was downcast in scholarly meditation, and that it is already dazed with unre-mitted study. His reading embraced the best authors of antiquity, as is evident from many passages in his works. He was a masterly linguist, and knew how to naturalize with taste and judgment such derivatives as would blend into an English setting with the most perfect homogeneity. Authorship was his pride, his pre-eminent forte, and life-long vocation. He set out to mould the polyglot elements of his mother tongue, and it is to him we must look for their intimate incorporation with each other. Observe the sonorous vocables that he first made standard English (I quote from Weisse's list) : *action, division, instrument, talent, nature, justice, sacrifice, discipline, doctrine, surprise, famine, multitude, observance, diligence, prologue, college, privilege, danger, pardon, volume, image, village, ignorance, silence, presence, franchise, condition* and hundreds of others that remain to this day unaltered. The following are a few in which a redundant letter has since been dropped : *Auditor* for *auditour* ; or in which the letter *y* has taken the place of a final *e*, or of *ee* : *fraternity* for *fraternite*, or *chastity* for *chastitee* ; or where the final syllable in *eux* has been changed into *ous*, as *curious* for *curieux* ; or *eur* into *or*, as *senator* for *senateur* ; and still further specimens of the same kind are *creatour, doctour, dignitee, faculte, precieux*,

viguer, *philosophie*, *superfluite*, and a patient host of other words equally distinct, forcible, and precise, in which a letter has been changed here and there or expelled altogether. There have been produced from these nouns a great number of corresponding verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and participles. The author last mentioned, while reading Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, copied about 2,340 different words introduced from the French, all nouns, verbs, or adjectives, which with their French inflexions number about 6,000 in that language, most all of which have since remained in English and taken their place in the family circle in unquestioned membership. These are examples of the beautiful and expressive terms that flowed through the pen of Chaucer into the impregnable resources of our language; and who can estimate their value to our speech? It may be true that dialect has little to do with thought, but what would become of thought unless it had a vehicle of clear and even powerful expression?

Inflexion in regard to language will be treated of hereafter. At present it must suffice to define it as a change of the vowel letter in the root word, as, for example, *man* in the singular is flexed into *men* in the plural. This internal moulding in the root, which is always a monosyllable, is still in extensive use, especially in strong nouns and verbs, so called. But inflexion also takes place where there is an addition to the root externally. In the Latin, for instance, *sermo* stands for *the word*; *sermonis* stands for *of the word*; and throughout the whole declension the meaning is indicated by the ending, without the use of prepositions as

in English. In regard to verbs, the Latin word *amo* stands for *I love*; *amas, thou lovest*; *amat, he loves*; and the root passes through a great number of inflexions, amounting to not less than 132, in order to signify the various relations of mood, tense, number, and person, till at last it appears in the first person singular, future tense, of the passive voice, in the sesquipedalian compound, *amatusfuero*, or as we would express it, *I shall have been loved*. Surely that sublime old pagan, Ovid, never used such a jawbreaker to express the tender passion in any of his amorous intrigues.

The declensions and conjugations in the Anglo-Saxon were even more cumbersome. For instance, the definite article had a variety of inflexions as has already been explained; it had four cases in the singular number and the same in the plural, and it had to agree with the noun which followed it; thus requiring great care in making the proper application. We owe a debt of gratitude to Chaucer that he used scarcely any of these external inflexions in the formation of our tongue. By employing prepositions instead of case endings he exhibits what is called an analytic language, as distinguished from the inflected forms of the old writers, and he has thereby conferred a lasting benefit upon language and literature. In the old system, where adjectives were inflected in the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders, besides having all the case endings of nouns, there was the fatal mistake to be apprehended of adding an adjective in the feminine to a noun in the masculine, an error which enables us to have a just idea of that which persons suing for a divorce term incompatibility of disposition; whilst an adjective in the in-

strumental with a noun in the dative would be a grammatical sin for which there is no hope of pardon. Chaucer discarded a majority of these inflexions, and we are scarcely justified in speaking of the dative, accusative, or instrumental cases at all.

The inflexions of the Anglo-Saxon were the principal obstacles to the new tongue; but these were gradually retrenched, and this was perhaps the most important change made in it in order to conform it to the Anglicizing process then going on. The most eager pursuit of the philologist has been unable to trace the precise manner in which this change was effected. But one thing is clear, it was the work of several generations, and did not appear to have made its greatest degree of progress till Chaucer reduced the reform to something like system. He abandoned the declensions for articles, adjectives, and adverbs, and reduced that of nouns almost to a single one, of three cases, two numbers, with the natural gender of sex. The many distinctions in the use of the verb were abandoned and their places supplied with simple and direct application of person and number, and the moods and tenses were so simplified as to mean the time and condition of the action with greater certainty. The rules of syntax though not strictly adhered to were greatly modified. The verb, generally, is made to agree with its subject, the adjective with the word it qualifies, and the article makes sure and definite the object to which it is related. If he still adhered occasionally to a useless inflexion, as in the case of *e*, it was only to help out his rhyme by making an additional syllable. To no one are we so much indebted as to this grand old English writer for the

simplicity of our tongue, and it is not too much to say that he has done more to shape its standard for literary purposes than any or all those who had preceded him.

Among the most marked of Chaucer's inflexional characteristics, is the use of the final *e*, as just mentioned, to create a syllable at the end of his rhymes to produce metrical harmony. This tendency abounds on every page. The poet has a license that the prose writer dare not take, and, when he has occasion to use a particular letter or word, he does not stop to think whether he is making a formal deviation from the usual mode of expression. He writes by inspiration, which has its own way, or else it ceases its work and surrenders its place to the mechanical interpretations of thought. These may be good or even instructive, but never uplifting and emotional. The fire burns upon the altar, but it is quenched by the want of the celestial element that makes true poetry. Here was Chaucer's genius displayed, here his inspiration never failed him, for when the divine influence was working out its melody he did not check its flow by the technical requirements of the set rules of art. Hence, he uses an accented *e* in the middle of a word to complete the measure, and sounds it as a final syllable at the end of a line to produce rhyme. An example of this kind occurs at the beginning of the Prologue to the Tales :

Whanne that April with its showres *sote*
The draught of March had perced to the *rote*.

Here, undoubtedly, *sote* and *rote* are to be read as dissyllables. There are hundreds of such instances. It has been discussed by several authors, especially by Tyrwhitt in his edition of Chaucer's works, and by Mr.

Guest in his History of English Rythms. Mr. James R. Lowell has also examined the question in his dissertations on the great poet, and they all agree that he sounded the final *e*, and the latter conclusively proves that he took this practice from the best examples of the Norman-French poets, mentioning particularly Marie de France and Master Robert Wace, who had rendered the story of Geoffroy Monmouth into Norman-French, as his authorities. But aside from all this it is evident that this letter had a peculiar position in the Early English writers, who used it to represent a final *a* in Anglo-Saxon nouns. It is admitted that this letter was sounded in that dialect, and this was continued after the change in the letter was introduced. So that by analogy to the practice of the Norman-French and Anglo-Saxon poets, Chaucer was justified in the use of final *e* to make a dissyllable when it suited the measure or the rhyme. His genitive case ends in *es*, and is generally a separate syllable, which we still employ for our possessive case, with the elision of the *e* before the *s*, and the use of an apostrophe; and this is now the only case that varies the termination from the nominative. The plural of nouns is in *es*, as *ladies*, *croppes*. For the Anglo-Saxon infinitive in *an* he substituted the enigmatical *en*, supposed by some to be derived from the Measo-Gothic, but it may well be doubted whether Chaucer ever heard of Ulfilas's translation, the only fragment of that dialect in existence.

Among his quaint peculiarities of style are his double negatives, which, however, do not produce an affirmative, and his negative verbs, which combine three parts of speech into a monosyllable, such as *nam* or *nys*

for *I am not* or *it is not*; *nas* and *nere* for *he was not* or *they were not*; *nyst*, *nysten*, for *he knew not* and *they knew not*; and several other forms which perhaps seem to us like monosyllabic monsters, but which undoubtedly were good English in the age of the poet. In an opposite manner, the examples are quite numerous where he makes dissyllables out of monosyllables by accenting a vowel, to eke out the measure of his line. Here is an instance:

And *lene* was his horse as is a rake.

He also joins the pronoun to a verb of which it is the subject, as *schaltow* for *shalt thou*, *wiltow* for *wilt thou*. From some cause these forms have proved incapable of maintaining their position in our language. Adjectives that end in *e*, in Saxon, have the same ending in Chaucer, as *blithe*, *clene*, and usually indicate the plural number. The first person singular, indicative mood, ends in *e*, second person, *st*, and the third person generally in *eth*, and the plural commonly in *en*. Inflexions in strong verbs are formed by an internal change in the root, as *slept* for *sleep*, *wept* for *weep*. The present participle is mostly in *yng*, and the prefixes *i* and *y* are found with past participles, occasionally, which end in *ede* or *de*, and sometimes *te*.

The influence of the poems of Chaucer upon our language has been very great. There was no one at that time who could speak English as any one else spoke it. When he wrote, the language was not only in a state of great disorder, but the different dialects had little or no ground of union, except the common origin from which they sprung. The mental cast of the Anglo-Saxon mind had not yet reached the fine percep-

tion of a literary style, and there was, therefore, no effort at any uniformity in the construction of language. The highest reach of man's ability to express thought lies in his power to command fitting words to express it, and it is not until he has passed through many phases of life that he acquires this supreme faculty. It is the most spiritual of his endowments, struggling to express his hopes and aspirations, and to which he can only attain after the mind has been far advanced in culture and refinement. In the age of Chaucer there were no societies devoted to the cultivation of the finer qualities, upon which the improvement of mankind depends. The noblest pursuit was the profession of arms, and the only hope of letters was confined to the cloister and the immediate circle of the court. Literature had not opened its precious stores for the people, and the only ambition had been to excel in the almost barbarous jargon of their local provincialisms. The times were not only rude, but besotted. The high-born were low enough in the scale of intelligence, and the masses were poor and ignorant. The churchmen were educated in Rome and Paris, and took no means of improving their own condition, much less that of the people. The modes of the great and the habits of common life were, however, sufficiently varied and picturesque to occupy the mind of Chaucer. The body politic had been organized, and the various stations in life were filled by those who were trained in their orderly ways and methods. Trades and professions were carried on; the field and the shop, the laborer and the merchant worked in their respective callings. The church was the greatest centre of knowledge and refinement, and monks and nuns were plentiful in every direc-

tion. What a vivid picture of that olden time is presented in the *Canterbury Tales*. It is the mirror of the age, in which all these orders pass before us, as in a panorama.

It is not a matter of surprise that such diversities of dialect should exist, since we have already seen that the first Saxon settlers came from different tribes, and probably brought with them each its own idiom. The Scandinavian and Dane, who settled the Northeast, would be different from the Jute, the Angle, and the Saxon, who came from the banks of rivers that flow into the German Ocean, and had their own peculiarities, which again distinguished them from the Frieslanders and others who joined the Saxon fleets at the time of the invasion. These divers races had settled different portions of the country, and their variant dialects were rendered still more perplexing by their intermingling with each other, so as to absorb a number of corruptions in the intermixture. These differences were probably first perpetuated in the Anglo-Saxon, and then in the English. Previous writers had employed the peculiar local dialect with which they were most familiar, and there were as many literary forms of speech as there were dialects. A writer in the North wrote in the Northern one, and those in the Midland and the South adopted their own. There were many sub-dialects, so to speak, in the East and West, in the North and South. All this was still further confused and perplexed by the copyists, who were extensively engaged to multiply the various works, for in those early days the printing press was unknown, and often the copyist belonged to the region of a dialect different from that of his author, and it not unfrequently happened that he employed his own,

instead of following faithfully his original. Chaucer writes in what is called the Midland dialect, which gained the ascendancy for literary purposes. Previous to his time, Englishmen, like most of the nations upon the Continent, had employed the Latin in their productions, but after the appearance of the *Canterbury Tales* no great work was written in that language, except it was almost immediately translated back into the vernacular. Bacon was a striking instance, but he did not believe in English, and wanted his writings in a language that could not change, so he wrote his philosophical works in Latin. They are now chiefly read in English, and his Latin *Tomes* are looked upon with awe and curiosity. It is to writers like Chaucer, who believed in their native tongue, that the language is chiefly indebted for its refinement and progress. No doubt these facts account for the dialectic variations that were still in full force when he began to write. I think it may be safely claimed that to him is due the first attempt to bring order out of this commingling of tongues, and to show the new English in anything like a form that we can recognize and read. He wrote English as we understand it, and he gave an example to his learned countrymen to use their own tongue in their literary works. He did more, for he gave to the world as fine a specimen of that language in a great poem as Dante had for the decaying forms of the Italian, and raised it to as high a point of excellence. Pretty much all that had been written before was obscured by the dress in which it appeared. Since Chaucer's day all is changed; a regard for good English, and the purity of our language, has ever since generally prevailed. The influence of a writer like Chau-

cer upon literature is immense, when we consider that all the writers since his time have paid tribute to his genius and his productions, and all men have agreed to look to him as the first to bring anything like order out of the chaos that hung over our vernacular when he began to write. It was to him more than to any other influence that we are indebted for the freshness and beauty of modern poetry. Who would have written poetry had not Chaucer shown them a language full of poetic beauty in which to sing the inspiration of the muse? Who would have composed a majestic work had he not shown a form of speech in which it could be preserved forever? Who would have written a great poem had he not first led the way to the shrine at Canterbury, and sung the songs of the pilgrims as they passed on? Who would have thought it worth while to go to Rome, to Italy, to France, and other regions to learn the strange and wonderful adventures of men and women engaged in the different walks and ways of life, in order to make his works a reflection of real things, of men and women as they live and move to their respective destinies? Who would have gone over the English language and selected all the fine words, all the sweet terms, all the noble sayings, all the golden truths it contains, and woven them into a form so interesting and attractive, but a man of high genius, and of a great and beautiful soul? I am not aware that any author has ever disparaged Chaucer's style, and I am sure that thousands are indebted to him for many pleasant moments and delightful hours while reading his stories, and taking in the rich melody of his verse, and the genial temper of his quaint and never-failing humor.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIDDLE ENGLISH—CONTINUED—1350-1550.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. James I. and the Scotch Poets of this Period. | 5. The Influence of the Reformation and Renaissance Upon the Language. |
| 2. Sir Thomas More, his Utopia, Letters, and Writings. | 6. Inflected and Uninflected Forms Discussed. |
| 3. Sir John Fortescue, Author of the First Treatise on the Laws of England. | 7. Middle English Analyzed and Described. |
| 4. Henry VIII., Erasmus, Cranmer, and the Writers of the Reformation. | |

FROM the days of Chaucer a period of one hundred and fifty years will scarcely reveal a single star upon the literary firmament of England. The sad echo of Denham's lines are as truthful as they are poetic:

Old Chaucer, like the morning star,
To us discovers day from far.
His lights these clouds and mists dissolved,
Which our dark nation long involved,
But he descending to the shades,
Darkness again the age invades.

It was during this dull interval that the Scottish poets attained a very high degree of perfection, and a few of them reflected upon the gloom which shrouded the Southern part of the island an extraordinary splendor. Among those of the first excellence, were Wyntoun,

Henryson, Blind Harry, William Dunbar, Gavin Douglass, and Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, besides many others of less merit, whose poetical compositions deserve a place in the history of English literature. The lays of James I., who had been kept a prisoner in England by Henry IV. for nineteen years, present us with passages of the highest flight of poetry. He married, after his enlargement, a daughter of the Earl of Somerset, who accompanied him to Scotland. Her charms evoked from the young prince, whilst yet a prisoner, a poem of singular beauty and power. I extract from it the following glowing apostrophe, composed upon seeing her walking in the garden from the window of the apartment in which he was confined :

Ah ! swete are ye a worldly creature
 Or lovingly thing in likeness of nature,
 Or are ye cupides own princess
 And, coming, are to loose me out of band ?
 Or are ye very Nature, the Goddesse,
 That have depainted with your heavenly hand
 This golden fall of flowers as they stand ?

“James belongs,” says Washington Irving,

“to one of the most brilliant eras of our literary history, and establishes the claims of his country to a participation in its primitive honors. While a small cluster of English writers are constantly cited as the fathers of our verse, the name of their great Scottish compeer is apt to be passed over in silence ; but he is evidently worthy of being enrolled in that little constellation of remote, but never-failing luminaries, who shine in the highest firmament of literature, and who, like morning stars, sang together at the bright dawning of the British poesy.”

I have already referred to the origin of the Scottish dialect, and shall not enter again upon the subject, fur-

ther than to recall the fact that it was substantially the same as that which at one time was spoken in the Northern and Eastern parts of England, as well as in the Southern and Eastern parts of Scotland. It was in this language that the Scots wrote their poetry; and Lindsay excuses himself for using it in his piece called "Experience and ane Courteour," in the following lines :

Quhowbeit that divers devote cunning Clerkis
 In Latyne toung hes wryttin syndrie bukis,
 Our unlernit knawis lytill of thare werkis,
 More than they do the ravyng of the rukis.
 Quharefore to colyearis, cairtaris, and to cukis,
 To Jok and Thome, my rhyme sall be directit,
 With cunning men, quhowbeit, it wylbe lackit.

This dialect continued to be the literary language of Scotland till the crowns of both kingdoms were united, and was spoken by James VI. when he ascended the throne of England. The changes produced by the merger of the two governments, and the consequent assimilation in the manners and speech of the people, have to some extent obscured these early works, though written in a language superior to that of Chaucer, and not so antiquated as that of Spenser. I give but a simple passage from Dunbar. The lines are from his celebrated apostrophe to Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, at the end of his "Golden Targe" :

O reverent Chawcere, Rose of Rethoris all,
 As to oure Tong ane Flouir imperiall
 That raise in Brittane evir, quho redis rycht.
 Thou beiris of makaris the Tryumphe riall,
 Thy fresch anamalit termes celicall.
 This matir couth illumynit have full brycht,

Was thou nought of our Englisch al the lycht,
 Sourmounting eviry Tong terrestriall
 Als fer as Mayes morow dois mydnycht.

O morall Gower, and Lydgate, laureate,
 Your sugurit lippis and Tongis aureate
 Bene til our eris cause of grite delyte.
 Your angel mouthis maist mellifluat
 Our rude language hes clere illumynate,
 And faire owre-gilt our speche that imperfyte
 Stude, or your goldyn pennis schupe to write,
 This ike before was bare and desolate
 Off Rethorike or lusty fresch endyte.

The literary annals of most of the 15th century register but few English works that stand out in relief among the dark and sanguinary scenes of that dreadful era. Gower belonged rather to the preceding century, and, at most, he wrote but one original poem in his native tongue, all his other performances being in the exhausted Latin of the Mediæval Age. Thomas Occleve and John Lydgate followed Gower, and they all three left the language in the condition they found it.

To one of the revered jurists in the British courts of law, Chief Justice Fortescue, is accorded the honor of writing a treatise on the difference between an absolute and a limited monarchy. He had told Edward IV., who was one of the most arbitrary princes that ever held despotic sway, that he was not an absolute, but a limited monarch, and that England was not a land where the will of the prince was itself the law, but where the prince could neither make laws nor impose taxes save by his subjects' consent.

In an age when the crown exercised an unrestrained dominion, there was scarcely room for the brave and

upright judge. He followed Henry VI., when driven from the throne into exile, first to Scotland, and then to Holland, where he wrote his book. Fortescue was about sixty years after Chaucer, but it was not until 1599 that Robert Mulcastis published it in a small duodecimo, with two columns on a page, one being the original Latin, and opposite was the translation in black-letter English. The translator, in speaking of his work, says:

“When I had over-runne it (the book), my desire to read it became nothing countervailable with the gladnes that I had read it, for my desire to read it came upon hope to finde some profitable lessons for my study, but my gladnes after reading sprang of the excellencie of the argument, whereon I did not dreame never to find so rich a treasure in so simple an habite. And because I wished all men to have part of my delight, methought it good to translate it into English forth of Latin, in which tong it was first written.”

It has been probably modernized in orthography, and is, therefore, of less value for comparative studies in its printed form; but as far as we can judge from its style and vocabulary in the translation, it presents a somewhat advanced stage of the language. The force and transparency necessarily depend upon a clear and unambiguous collocation of the words, and these are arranged so grammatically that they evidently convey the meaning of the author. The book is a clear step towards our present idiom.

The times were hard and dark—were out of joint and sanguinary; men lived in peril of their lives and fortunes. It was the era familiarly known as the Wars of the Roses, which extended for thirty years from their first outbreak, in 1445, and they constitute a landscape

of such surprising havoc as to be utterly beyond the belief of mankind, were it not that their souvenirs are too palpable for dispute. We have but scant information regarding the progress of our tongue during these fierce convulsions. We know, however, that conversation was carried on, business transacted, battle cries shouted, the herald's message delivered, defiance uttered, and spirit-stirring addresses spoken by their leaders to rouse the enthusiasm of soldiers upon the eve of conflict, in the English that Chaucer wrote fifty years before; and we also know that the native writers were gradually inspired to use their own idiom in prose as well as poetry. The historical probabilities are that the peasant spoke a local dialect, the *clerke* a grammatical English, and that the haughty Norman baron delivered his commands in a jargon half French and half Saxon. If the 15th century apparently did little for language, it furnished abundant material for the antiquarian and the historian; for romances of chivalry, and for almost every element of fascinating reality in the literature of the imagination. The tyrants of the race exterminated each other on many a stricken field, and from the destruction of their princely names and factions, the genius of freedom and letters was born, like Cæsar, with the knife. It was the century in which what is called Modern History, in contradistinction to the History of the Middle Ages, is by common consent presumed to commence, and the great events transpiring in other parts of the world agitated powerfully the Anglo-Saxon race, and ultimately emancipated their language from the yoke of mediæval mysticism. We know how this influence inspired our poetry,

our philosophy, and eloquence in the next century. England, like Scotland, was in pursuit of political and religious reformation, and the spirit which this sentiment infused in her language during this and the following century was most signally displayed in its prodigious exuberance, its variety of terms, its gracefulness in composition, its grandeur in the expression of strong feeling, and its majesty in speech and oratory. The spirit of the age was about to introduce important changes in the minds of men on the subject of religion and the privileges of the people. The language was growing strong, and becoming equal to the approaching contest. Education, of which there had been none that deserved the name for nearly two centuries, lighted its torch and commenced its irrepressible career. The Universities of Cambridge and Oxford soon became the centres of the new learning, and schools were instituted all over the Northern kingdom by the followers of John Knox. Scholars came from Italy to teach Greek, and the literary remains of antiquity were opened anew. Erasmus astonished the world with his prodigies of learning, and often made England his place of residence. He combated the dogmatism and mysticism of the Middle Ages, and went almost as far as Luther went at a later period. He held up the monkish orders to the contempt and hatred of society, and wrote his book, the "Praise of Folly," his song of triumph over the old world of ignorance and bigotry, which was to vanish away before the light and knowledge of the new reign. Colet taught the most radical doctrines at Oxford, and even Warham, the primate of England, and chancellor of Henry VIII., most thoroughly rea-

lized the new conception of an intellectual and moral equality, before which the old social distinctions of the world were to vanish away.

Perhaps Sir Thomas More was the most illustrious Englishman of that date who improved our vernacular by writing it in prose. He is a striking example of the vicissitudes incident to the religious controversies that purple the annals of the period. From a relentless persecution of the Protestants, he became himself a martyr, and he must have recalled a bitter recollection of his own intolerance as he passed on with the axeman to the place of execution. He was also a pleasant man of the world, a great lawyer, a profound scholar, and his spirit of humor and merriment did not forsake him on the scaffold, which he ascended, saying to the executioner, "I pray you see me safe up, and for my coming down, let me shift for myself"; and when the axe was raised he bade him stop, and quickly observed, "My beard is upon my neck. I shall place it outside of the block, for it is innocent of the crime of treason and ought not to be cut." Then exposing his neck naked upon the block, he murmured: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord," when the blow fell and severed the head, that was afterwards perched upon London bridge. We are reminded of the love and devotion of his matchless daughter, who, to youth, genius, and beauty, added a filial piety more than human; who recovered that noble head, to be embalmed and preserved in her oratory, and interred with her, according to her request, under the same stone and in the same sepulchre—a scene which still attracts our unspeakable sympathies.

The Reformation doubled the religious sentiment of

England, but it is full of eccentric problems. More persecuted the Protestants, and with coarse invective considered that Tyndale "was the son of the Devil in hell," while Henry VIII. had the satisfaction of persecuting both Catholic and Protestant, and of sending the heretic who denied the *real presence* and the traitor who refused the oath of supremacy on the same hurdle to the same ignominious death.

But this is not quite in the line of our inquiries. Of the writings of Sir Thomas More, the most celebrated is his romance of Utopia, in Latin. He is also the author of several other works, the Latinity of which, it is said, cannot be excelled, but as their version in English conveys no idea of his style, further reference to them is unnecessary. Some letters to his family and an unfinished biography of Edward V., which appears to that profound writer, Mr. Hallam, as the first example of good English language, pure and perspicuous, well chosen, without vulgarisms or pedantry, are the only remains of what he wrote in the vernacular.

Previous to the 16th century it can scarcely be said that English prose was anything more than ordinary talk reduced to writing. Nothing like style or graphic delineation was known. No treatise on the art of composition had yet appeared, and the Latin grammar by Lily belongs to the early part of this century. English, however, had been the dialect of ordinary conversation, and its common use by the polite and educated classes had gradually made its terms more distinct and precise, so that at the commencement of the 16th century its urbane features began to rise above the impoverished dialects of the vulgar. The revival of learn-

ing in England under Henry VIII. might have shed an immense glory upon his reign, for his uncommon natural advantages would have drawn him to its support; but his sensuality and licentiousness were of such an unprecedented character as to almost destroy the hopes of its friends. He affected to be a disciple of Aristotle, a student of Saint Thomas Aquinas, a metaphysician and a theologian. And he aspired to spiritual supremacy, and to be the living oracle of the Scriptures. His ambition was to transform his palace into a Vatican. Unlike his sordid father, however, he professed admiration for men of letters. He corresponded with Erasmus and called him from the Continent, and subsequently gave him a professorship at Oxford. Sir Thomas More, the author of the famous romance of Utopia, was his chancellor; Linacre, who translated Virgil and Horace, Dean Colet, who repudiated the subtleties of the Middle Ages and taught Plato's philosophy, and Grocyn, who introduced the study of Greek at Oxford, were received by Henry as the equals of cardinals and legates, of dukes and lords. He was sufficiently learned to appreciate their scholarship, and merry enough to enjoy the flashes of wit with which they enlivened the most serious conversation. Nearly all the men who broke with the dead past had studied Greek beyond the Alps, and returned to speak of the grandeur of Florence and of the Medicis. The king's ambition was to excel all other princes as the benefactor of learning. But other thoughts soon engrossed his attention. Within three years after his coronation (1512) a frantic spirit of foreign conquest lured him into a war with France. The year previous his favor and friendship had been

solicited by Julius II., who sent him a sacred rose perfumed with musk and annointed with chrism, and thus drew him over to an alliance against France and the war just mentioned.

Three years more rolled on, when, vain of his theological learning and ambitious to be regarded as the protector of the church and the champion of its faith, he made his famous attack upon the writings of Luther. Two copies of the "Assertion of the Seven Sacraments," magnificently printed, were transmitted through the Ambassador of England to Pope Leo X., who received them in the Sacred College, and conferred upon him the title of "Defender of the Faith." Distracted by the gayeties of his court, by his bacchanal carousals, and his domestic intrigues, his early resolutions of being the good genius of learning were greatly relaxed, and the golden dreams of its friends disappointed. He desired the triumph of his passion for Anne Boleyn, and in accomplishing this atrocious purpose, he revolted as a Catholic, not as a Protestant, from Rome. Henry did not understand the schism which he created. It was a germ of the age. The scholars and poets had for a century and a half been inexhaustible in their satire upon the disorders of the clergy and the lazy, vicious life of the monastic orders. From the vision of William Langland, concerning Piers the Plowman, in 1362 (oldest manuscript), to the Praise of Folly, by Erasmus, in 1512, English literature had been the strenuous but unconscious propagandist of the Reformation. Chaucer had ridiculed the sale of indulgences, and there had been an almost irresistible current of opinion against the papal authority ever since the days of King John.

The people and nobility were penetrated with a profound sentiment of national dislike at the humiliations of their government when the Roman pontiff reduced the kingdom to the condition of a fief of Rome; and this feeling never ceased to animate them until it undermined the foundations of the Catholic establishments in England. The Pope nominated an immense number of clergy to the finest benefices, and conferred them upon his Italian creatures. He levied tribute upon the ecclesiastics to a greater amount than the king's revenue. The ordinances against the church were numerous; such was the statute of Mortmain, and those against appeals from the decisions of English courts to the court of Rome; so also were those against the interference of the Pope in the appointment of bishops, and against other encroachments of the spiritual tribunals. In fact, all through the 15th century the spiritual power was on the decline, and the events were gestating which resulted in the upheaval of the 16th.

In this light it is easy to believe that a Reformation would have come without Henry. His war with the Holy Father was personal, and not with the church. His mind was probably a virgin blank to any pure sentiment of religion. His victory was complete when Cr  nmer's consistorial court annulled his marriage with Catherine of Aragon and consecrated Anne Boleyn as his lawful wife and queen; and when he seized upon ecclesiastical powers he was far from obeying an inspiration of his conscience. His passion was first, divorce, and next absolute authority over all laws human and divine; to be king and pontiff over both church and state, and the hierophant in a hierarchy of his own. To

show that he still was a Catholic, he persecuted those who denied its doctrines with even more barbarity than those who refused to recognize his ecclesiastical supremacy. But fortunately for the British Isle his rapture with Rome took a form quite contrary to his cruel and dissolute passions. "Your Majesty," said Thomas Cromwell, his minister of state, "you are only half a king, and your people are only half-subjects; the bishops take two oaths—one to the king and the other to the Pope, and the second relieves them from the first; make yourself wholly king, supported by your Parliament; proclaim yourself head of the Church of England, and you will behold the glory of your name and the prosperity of your people." He embraced the advice without hesitation, and with inexpressible joy. Nor did he dream that by a logical application of the same reasoning one hundred years later, the Puritans would attack the royal supremacy he established, and thus prepare the triumph of modern liberty and Anglo-Saxon civilization over the world.

It has suited some writers to attribute the honor of the Reformation in England to Henry VIII.—especially is this view insinuated by that reckless defender of tyranny and crime, Mr. Froude, in his paradoxical history of England. But if Cranmer wrote a book to prove that Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon was interdicted by Leviticus, he at the same time proclaimed the supreme authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith, and the entire independence of his country from any foreign dominion—the grand principle which today rules the Anglo-Saxon race in both hemispheres. His fervid spirit, his popular eloquence, his sincerity, cour-

age, and learning marked him as the champion of the cause. Cranmer is, therefore, the true author of the Reformation in that country, as Luther was in Germany, and John Knox in Scotland. After 1536 he was employed on an English version of the Scriptures, and defeated Gardiner's attempt to restrict their reading. It was pure in style, and had the same noble simplicity of the Wickliffe and Tyndale versions. In 1544 he published an English Litany, and three years later his first book of homilies. Burnet makes him the hero of his history.

A number of writers now appeared in their mother tongue, both Catholic and Protestant, and entered into the theological controversies that convulsed the country like the throes of an earthquake. The infallibility of the Pope, the adoration of angels and saints, the sale of reliques and indulgences, the doctrine of excommunication, of confession, and purgatory, the real presence in the eucharist, monastic vows, and the celibacy of the priests, passed through the crucible of thought, and were presented, perhaps for the first time, in a language that the people could understand. Divided opinions raged on these subjects with more than frantic zeal, and the history of the movement is stained with tales of torture and bloodshed. But the language gained strength and form from the contest. Among those who wrote, Sir Thomas More and Cranmer have already been mentioned. Along with them were Elyot, author of what was, perhaps, nearly the first Latin and English dictionary. He also discussed the living issues of the day in several political tracts and religious essays. Tyndale belongs to the early part of

the century, and his writings are still considered fine examples of grammatical English. Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, and Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of Rochester, defended the faith, for which they were burned at Oxford, Oct. 16, 1555, by Bonner, who was also a bishop. These influences effected the substitution of English for the Latin. The correspondence of the Paston family that has been preserved and the domestic letters of Sir Thomas More exhibit the predilection for its use among the cultivated classes of society, whilst the ordinary conversations of such persons as Lady Jane Grey with her beloved teacher, John Alymer, and those of More with his peerless daughter, raised it to a regularity not previously attained in its verbal expression. The language thus received a polish from its use by people of genius and taste, and the Anglo-Saxon radicals gradually assimilated with other verbal accretions into idiomatic forms to supply the exigencies of speech and of modern intelligence. By Middle English, as already stated, is meant from about 1350 to 1550, a space of two hundred years, and it may be termed the last of the formative periods of our language in which old forms decayed and new ones appeared; declinative variations were dropped, and their places supplied by pronominal ones like *who*, *which*, *whom*, and *him*, while a large class of indeclinable particles and auxiliaries compensated for the almost complete loss of case endings and tense inflexions. The grammatical refinements and distinctions of the ancient parts of speech completely yielded to the logical and precise forms of our modern syntax. Here, for the sake of clearness, a little repetition seems necessary. The Latin possessed six cases, and

the Anglo-Saxon five for the declension of nouns ; but the English, more simple, retains out of this complicated system only the nominative ; the possessive takes the place of the genitive, and the objective is substituted for the dative, the accusative, and ablative. Instead of the ten different words into which the Anglo-Saxon definite article is declined, we have but the single particle *the*, and are thus relieved from the necessity of selecting the particular form of the article to express the number, gender, and person of the noun to which it relates. The same observations apply to adjectives. They are no longer riveted to the backs of the substantives which they qualify, but are brought forward to their natural position in front. The Latin model inflects this part of speech with the same number of case endings as the nouns, and the rule is that they must agree in gender, number, and person. This inconvenient method is abandoned in English, which has no distinction of gender, number, or person for its adjectives, and its genders for nouns belong to them naturally. In Latin words which are called adjectives have twelve cases or different endings in the first degree of comparison, and eleven each for the comparative and superlative, making in all thirty-four variant endings to a single part of speech. We have but two aside from the positive, and they are invariably *er* and *est*. Our declensions are extremely simple. Our articles, adjectives, conjunctions, and prepositions admit of no change of form, and this is true also of our nouns, unless it is the sign of the plural, which is always *s* or *es*, and sometimes *en*, as *oxen*. The two numbers, singular and plural, three cases, three persons, and an abundance of particles are among the

syntactical forms which were fully developed at the period of Middle English, and which time has imperceptibly conformed to the requirements of our tongue. In regard to the verb, the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon were inflected languages from the beginning, and the form of the verb itself expressed a shade of meaning or fancy which we express substantially by the aid of auxiliaries. When, therefore, we wish to denote *duty*, *possession*, *ability*, *necessity*, *compulsion*, *liberty*, *power*, *determination* or *deference* we employ these so-called auxiliary verbs to make our meaning intelligible. An example of this can be found in the use of most any verb. Take the verb *to write*: to express a duty, *I ought to write*, or *should write*; to imply liberty, *I may write*, if I desire. *I can write* implies my ability to write, *I might write* shows power, and *I would write*, inclination. *Could* and *should* denote both the duty and power to write, and determination is expressed by *shall*.

It seems to me that the sufficiency of our verb for clear and precise comprehension of essential distinctions, is as fully attained as by a vast multitude of flexible endings. An acute writer observes that "the arrangement of the English verb, the most important element of language, is peculiarly full and perfect, capable of expressing every relation of time, variety of action, and modification of thought with familiar clearness and philosophical precision."

Another of the changes of Middle English relates to the present participle, which first took its form in *ing*; and the preterit, which simply changes the vowel in the irregular verbs, as in the word *write* for the present into *wrote* for the past; and our pronouns, which are de-

rived mostly from Anglo-Saxon, as will appear by and by, were harmoniously absorbed into English composition. In fact, at the close of this period the language existed nearly as we have it today. It had become analytical, that is, words were placed one after the other in the order of thought, and were connected by pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions. It is not my purpose to pronounce upon the comparative merits of the grammatical forms furnished by an inflected language, and one in which the relations of words are pointed out by invariable particles. I suppose it is admitted that the advantages of flexible cases, which can be applied in Latin and Greek so as to multiply the same word into a great variety of forms to express different shades of meaning, are important and useful devices. The metrical gain is, perhaps, undeniable. But greater inflexion has prevailed in other tongues without producing any support to this theory. Among living languages, Mr. G. P. Marsh informs us that the Turkish verb has three or four thousand distinctly marked and expressive forms. The Basque language also, still extant, inflects every part of speech, including interjections and conjunctions. Some of its nouns have twenty cases. The Romans, with six case endings, and the Greeks with five could, beyond doubt, express every shade of thought, and in this respect these superb idioms had a verb perfectly exuberant in different forms of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty in number. These varied terminations are supposed to give the orator and the poet a master grip upon the language in which he thinks or speaks. Our English, with but few of these grammatical accidents, is distin-

guished by its energetic eloquence, by its rich variety of expression, as well as by its perspicacity, directness, and strength. Even a foreigner like Jacob Grimm remarks that it has a veritable power of expression such as never, perhaps, stood at the command of any other language of men. With our rules of grammar the position of words is important. The subject of a verb must precede and the object follow it. In the passive voice this is reversed. For instance, when I say "John purchased a book," the signification is the same as if I had said "a book was purchased by John." It is apparent that the words have changed their position, although the logical relations are the same. The noun *John* has passed from the nominative to the objective case, and the reverse of this has put the noun *book* in the nominative instead of the objective. The rules of our syntax require that substantives should generally occupy certain places in relation to verbs and prepositions. The place of the verb is ascertained by reference to the case which precedes it and follows it. The object is placed after an active transitive verb, and the subject in front. In the example of a passive verb, however, the necessity of position in our system of grammar forces the object into the nominative case, although it performs no action, and has only suffered a change of location in the sentence. It is, however, a logical statement of the fact, and our grammar, therefore, parses it according to the relation of the words as they stand in their order. In the last example the word *book* is, from its position, in the nominative case, and *John* is governed in the objective by the preposition *by*.

It will, therefore, be seen that position is one of the

grand features of our grammar. The words proceed hand in hand, each one clinging to its neighbor. The dependent words are kept together by a ligament of concord and agreement that keeps the sense before the mind as the sentence proceeds. They resemble those Alpine voyagers, who have provided themselves with a rope, to which each explorer is fastened by his belt, so that if one falls into a snow-hidden crevice he is instantly restored to his place by the tension of this common bond, which allows each to approach the glacier's edge with safety.

It is evident that English is capable of expressing every variety of thought and every form of useful erudition by the syntactical construction of its simple elements. If the variant forms of inflexion conduce to clearness and accuracy, that of position and arrangement has attained equal, if not superior, precision by uniting sentences in the natural order of expression. We have seen the grandest and most harmonious periods and the finest epic poem of the race in the English idiom, notwithstanding its paucity of grammatical inflexions. The relation of the words is made easy, not only from the context, but by the connecting links, which determine the dependence of the parts, however separated. If our verbs and other parts of speech are less flexible than those extended by inflexion, our relational terms and particles are numerous, clear, forcible, and precise. An indeclinable part of speech may be as convenient as a suffix. The continuity of an idea begins with the first word in an English sentence, and is not broken till the last one is reached. The thought and the language proceed *pari passu*, for the words are

logically connected to the end. Whenever an ambiguity occurs in an English author or speaker, it will generally be found to spring from the misuse of a word, or the misplacement of an antecedent. A proper selection of terms will prevent all equivocation. Clearness and distinctness are qualities of speech which depend upon clearness of thought. To use words that unmistakably express the meaning intended to be conveyed, is indispensable to a good style. Verbal and logical inaccuracies are not sanctioned in any language, though practical in all. The Delphic oracles were rendered in an idiom of the richest inflexions, to mean anything or to have no meaning whatever. The poverty of our language in terminal forms undoubtedly leads to paraphrastic expressions in English composition, but the aptest words to express their meaning is a prominent characteristic of our standard authors; and it seems to be acknowledged, even by foreigners, that our literature is distinguished not only by correctness and subtlety of thought, but by the nicety of terms through which they are made perfectly intelligible, and the world is impressed with the opinion that many of the finest contemporary writings are of English authorship.

Before passing on to Modern English, it may be observed that it covers a much wider field than its formative history and changes; yet our general acquaintance with its analysis, acquired by its articulate use, as well as from our knowledge of its current literature, makes it unnecessary to enter upon an investigation of such boundless extent as to follow its written productions with *seriatim* comparisons. The affluence of English literature imposes upon a mere historical

sketch a fastidious choice in selecting examples of its preservation or improvement. It will be sufficient, therefore, to confine our attention to such periods or authors as have had a determining influence upon its development. In this light, it is expedient to notice the reign of Elizabeth, when we first find its purity established and acknowledged, and when it culminated in a state of perfection that has sometimes been compared to the Augustan age of the Latin. For the more particular execution of our purpose, we can trace its important features and characteristics in such writers as Bacon and Shakespeare, Milton and Macaulay. Our first step in Modern English will introduce us to the Shakespearean epoch, known also as the Elizabethan era. That queen, however, was too meanly parsimonious to exhibit a liberal support for men of letters. Her prime minister had about the same regard for them as that profanely expressed by a distinguished statesman of our own country whenever he mentioned "them literary fellers." She treated with entire contempt the most supreme genius of her court, and Bacon went unrewarded without any employment, except that of prosecuting Essex, who had been her lover and his benefactor. The distinguished historian Hayward had incurred her resentment because, in speaking of the first years in the reign of Henry IV., she thought he inculcated a spirit of boldness and faction. She called upon Bacon to find some quirk in the law of treason by which he could be prosecuted for that crime, but Bacon advised her positively that there was not the slightest pretext for the charge. Upon its being suggested that Hayward was not really the author of the book that

bore his name, she asked if he could be condemned to the torture to make him reveal the real author. Bacon's answer was at once witty and unique. "Nay, madame," he replied, "he is a doctor—never rack his person, but rack his style; let him have pen, ink, and paper, and help of books, and be enjoined to continue the story where it breaketh off, and I will undertake, by collating the styles, to judge whether he were the author or no." Thus adds Hume, who relates the story (vol. II., 120): "Had it not been for Bacon's humanity, this author, a man of letters, had been put to the rack for a most innocent performance." The authors who placed dependence upon court patronage were disappointed. Burleigh had an unfriendly disposition towards Bacon, and obstructed the queen's bounty to Spenser. The latter died in poverty, and the former did not obtain preferment till the next reign. John Lyly, the fashionable court poet, and the author of the celebrated "Euphues," after spending many years to entertain his sovereign and her favorites, at last wrote to the queen herself: "Thirteen years your Highness' servant, but yet nothing. A thousand hopes, but all nothing; a hundred promises, but yet nothing. * * * My last will is shorter than mine invention; but three legacies—patience to my creditors, melancholy without measure to my friends, and beggary without shame to my family." Shakespeare, who conferred a matchless splendor upon his age and upon his race, stood upon the banks of the Thames, an unhonored spectator, as the royal barge passed to the Tower. But we accept him as the founder of a new dynasty in the republic of letters, who raised the dialect of his country into the

most powerful expression that human thought has ever received. It is, therefore, allowable to dwell more largely upon Shakespeare and his contemporaries than any other modern writer in our language, except John Milton, the poet, scholar, and philosopher.

CHAPTER IX.

MODERN ENGLISH—1550 TO THE BEGINNING OF THE XIX. CENTURY.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Marlowe and the Dramatic Poets of the Renaissance. His Dr. Faustus, the Prototype of Goethe's, and his Richard III., of Shakespeare's. The First Writer in Blank Verse. | Prose Novel in Our Language. Description of the Book. Its Effect upon the Language of other Authors. |
| 2. Lamb's Criticisms. | 7. English Fiction. Thomas Nash. His Jack Wilton. Its Pure English Style. |
| 3. Ben Jonson. His Extraordinary Skill. Friendship for Shakespeare. His English Grammar. | 8. Ballad Poetry. |
| 4. Dramatic Writing. The Miracle Plays. | 9. English Takes its Present Form. Example Given. Some of the Changes. Correct Use of the Verb. William Lily's Grammar. Its Use Required by Order of the King. |
| 5. Customs of the Age Affected its Language. | |
| 6. The New English Introduced by John Lyly. His "Euphues." The First | 10. The Derivations from Latin, and how the same were made. |

WHEN we speak of Shakespeare we find a great host of names that have come down to us with less or more distinction, and several of them produced works that reached a high degree of excellence, and are still read with interest. Among these, especially, are Marlowe, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, and "rare Ben Jon-

son." There were several others of lesser note, such as Heywood, Middleton, Rowley, Ford, Lyly, Nash, and Green. Among them all Marlowe was the first in time, and probably the first in the order of his genius. The *Faustus* of Marlowe is a poem of diabolism, that turns upon the feats performed by a personal devil. Undoubtedly Goethe is indebted to this grand intellectual performance for his extravagant and highly wrought tale of the same name; but the closing scene of the Marlowe *Faustus* in fervid passion, pathos, and overwhelming terror and despair far exceeds its modern counterpart. Marlowe's *Richard III.* is thought to have been the prototype of Shakespeare's, and to contain many splendid passages not inferior to the latter. His scenes are hurled upon the imagination without careful polish or exact method, and without regard to the conventional unities of time or space, as in the old tragedies. He disregarded the rules of dramatic construction and representations. Ridiculous and grotesque scenes stand closely with those of great beauty, and often with those of thrilling agony and power. But what is more to the purpose of this treatise, he is entitled to the distinction of being the first writer who used blank verse in English tragedy. This was the metre in which he composed his "*Tamberlaine the Great*," and which he carried to still greater perfection in his second play, "*The Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*." He thus not only emancipated English prosody from the annoyance of sacrificing thought or sentiment to the conventional form of rhyming composition, and he illustrated in his own poems the grandest poetical measure that has ever been made use of by the tragic or epic muse. Favorable specimens

of Marlowe's style are found in the numerous histories of English literature, which it would be inconvenient to cite in this mere sketch of the language. With regard to Massinger, Middleton, and Rowley, Charles Lamb tells us that there is an exquisiteness of moral sensibility making men's eyes to gush out tears of delight at their sweet tragic comedy; and we are informed by the same inimitable critic that Ford was of the first order of poets, seeking for sublimity, not by parcels, in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence in the hearts of men, in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds. The task of discriminating between the merits of these writers is, perhaps, one of curious comparison only; but it is conceded on all hands that Ben Jonson has a place of his own among them all. He had more originality than the others, for he invented his own plots, and displayed extraordinary skill in contriving situations for the display of his characters. "It is believed," says a modern writer, "that there is not a whim or affectation in common life noted in any memoir of the manners of that age which he has not drawn out and framed in his vigorous and idiomatic English, and for strength in diction, for good sense and wise reflections, no other of his contemporaries deserve to be compared to him." These qualities have secured the affection of mankind even to this day, and we delight to speak of him almost as we would speak of a personal friend, "O, rare old Ben." One Jack Young gave a mason eighteen pence to cut these words on the stone over his grave in Westminster Abbey. The following lines from "The Fortunate Isles," a masque designed for

the court (1626), is an instance of his inspiration suggesting some of our modern inventions :

“When you ha’ made your glasses, gardens in the depth of winter, when you have penetrated hills like ayre (air), dived to the bottom of the sea like leade, and rise’ again like corke * *

“When you have made the world your gallery, can dispatch a business in some three minutes with the Antipodes, and in five more negotiate the Globe over, you must be poore still.”

Ten years previously Shakespeare’s *Queen Mab* had said, “I’ll put a girdle ’round the earth in forty minutes.”

Jonson was ten years younger than Shakespeare, and outlived him twenty-one. His comedy, “Every Man to His Humor,” was performed in 1598 by a company to which Shakespeare belonged, and in which he took the leading part. Their relations were those of intimate friendship and constant intercourse. The estimation in which he held his great contemporary is thus expressed :

“The players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penn’d) he never blotted out line. My answer hath been, ‘would he had blotted a thousand,’ which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity this, but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by wherein he most faulted, and to justifie my owne candor (for I loved the man, and do honor his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any). He was, indeed, honest, and of an open and free nature, and excellent *phansie*, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped, *sufflaminandus erat*, as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his own power ; would the rule of it had beene so, too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter ; as when he said, in the person of Cæsar, one speaking to him : ‘Cæsar, thou dost me

wrong.' He replied: 'Cæsar did never wrong, but with just cause,' and such like, which were ridiculous. But he redeemed his vices with his virtues. There was evermore in him to be praised (praised) than to be pardoned."

But what most concerns our present subject in his works is "The English Grammar, made by Ben Jonson, for the benefit of all strangers." More than one hundred and twenty years had elapsed since the publication of William Lily's Grammar, during which period the English language had received much cultivation and refinement. The progress of its literature had been enriched by Spenser, Shakespeare, and Bacon, to say nothing of a host of minor authors, who have left in it the legacies of their wisdom and genius.

Jonson's Grammar was probably well adapted for the purpose intended by its author, "the benefit of strangers." English had assumed its independent position as one of the cultivated idioms of Europe, and its critical study was attracting the attention of foreigners. The book was well suited to the needs of the people, and was useful enough to the natives as well as to strangers, for any one who would read it with care could obtain a pretty fair grammatical knowledge of the language. He admitted *w* among the English letters, although not used in the Latin, and he made *u* and *v* but one character. His parts of grammar are etymology and syntax, while prosody and orthography are not parts of grammar, but diffused like the blood and spirit through the whole. He gives particular attention to illustrating principles by carefully selected examples from the early authors, not forgetting a good deal of Latin.

It would be curious to trace the causes which gave

this direction at that particular period to dramatic writing, and which called forth such a galaxy of authors in that department of literature. Princes and other men of eminence extended neither patronage nor encouragement to those engaged in the art of play-writing. The religious sentiment of the age looked with disfavor upon the stage, the Puritans abhorred it, and the higher classes had scarcely made it fashionable. There is no way of accounting for the remarkable distinction which those writers enjoyed, unless it be that the people, who must be amused, flocked to the performances to witness the many scenes of wit, humor, and passion with which their works abound, and the descriptions of manners and events, of morals and impurities, with which human genius had invested the *dramatis personæ*.

But, perhaps, there is an historical explanation of the sudden and remarkable splendor to which dramatic writing all at once attained. It is well known that down to the reign of Henry VIII. the stage had been occupied solely with mysteries, moralities, and miracle-plays, all more or less under the government of the Roman Catholic church. Henry VIII. abolished Catholicism as a state church, broke up the monasteries, and proclaimed his own as the chosen church of the state. Then the proper stage burst its fetters, and the latent power of the dramatic poets and authors came into possession. This was about the year 1525.

A similar change in public taste was made manifest 270 years later, when the sacred fires of poetry almost instantaneously were kindled by the Peninsular War (1800), which fired the imagination and purified the tastes of the British people, and Scott,

Byron, Southey, Moore, Wordsworth, Tom Campbell, Keats, Shelley, and Milman appeared almost at the same moment, and with a rapid step attained to the highest pinnacle of literary perfection. It was a brilliant constellation, that only grew dim when the iron-horse, driven by steam, chased Pegasus away from the eminence he had so suddenly reached.

It may be convenient to notice just here that the first prose romance in our language is also ascribed to this period. Elizabeth had a passion for display and decoration. Her garments and palaces were ornamented to excess. Her ladies and courtiers adorned their persons to gain her favor, and the lords sold their lands in order to appear in her presence in rich and striking costumes. The pageants she delighted in when journeying were on a scale of such magnificence and prodigality of expenditure as sometimes to impoverish her entertainers. Wherever she stopped she seemed to be upon a field of cloth of gold. A writer in the latter years of Elizabeth laments, according to the fashion of all grumblers, at dress: "that it is impossible to know who is noble, who is worshipful, who is a gentleman, who is not, because all persons dress indiscriminately, in silks, velvets, satins, damasks, taffetas, and such like, notwithstanding that they be both base by birth, mean by estate, and servile by calling." And this he adds with due solemnity: "I count a great confusion, and a general disorder; God be merciful unto us." And when he comes to the particular causes that excite his spleen against the women, he exclaims: "Their gowns and kirtles are of silk or grogram, or taffeta, some of scarlet and of fine cloth at ten or even twenty shillings a yard. These are over-

laid with lace two or three fingers broad, or else edged with velvet six fingers broad, with sleeves hanging to the ground, so that when they have all these goodly robes upon them women seem to be the smallest part of themselves, for the real woman is only like a puppet or mormo inside to give motion to the great artificial woman of haberdashery that we discern going about. What is there to make a woman pleasanter in gaudy-colored silks, and cloth stockings, with corked shoes, pantofles, and slippers, black, white, green, and yellow, covered with gold and silver embroidery, or in the scarfs, the velvet masks, the scented gloves, and those devils' spectacles, their looking-glasses, which they carry with them in their girdles?"

This taste for finery and easy and graceful manners had a marked influence upon language and words. Not only were Latin neologisms resorted to to eke out phrases but all the Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French powers of our language were developed for expressive words and beautiful sounds and all sorts of what was considered elegance in speech. Quaint phrases, brilliant conceits, gave one pre-eminence at the court of this learned sovereign, who read Virgil in Latin and Plutarch in Greek; and the ingenuity of her poets was exercised in finding fanciful combinations of expression. Taine says of them that "they played with words, twisted, put them out of shape, and gilded and embroidered and plumed their language like their garments." Whatever was trivial and commonplace became the subject of ridiculous comparisons, and the simple truth was covered up with a monstrous avalanche of antitheses. The reputed author of this "New English," as it was then called,

was the famous John Lyly.* Some of his poems are still admired for their harmony and graceful flow. His plays were composed for court entertainments, and the parts were taken by children. A few fragments are quoted by Mr. A. Mills, which display much fine feeling. He was held in high esteem at the court of Elizabeth, and upon the production of his prose romance called "Euphues," he was honored with the title of "King of Letters." For this distinction he was probably not a little indebted to the flatteries he addressed to his royal patron. He complimented the ladies of the court, also, telling them he was indifferent to the critics and only aspired to interest their judgment and merit their approbation; and that he would rather know that his "Euphues" was in their dressing-cases than lying open upon the table of the learned. One of his recorded flatteries to the queen I give as a not unfavorable example of his style: "Touching the beauty of this prince, her countenance, her majesty, her personage, I cannot think that it may be sufficiently commended, when it cannot be too much marveled at; so that I am constrained to say, as Praxitiles did when he began to paint Venus and her son, who doubted whether the world could afford colors good enough for two such fair faces, and I whether my tongue can yield words to blaze that beauty, the perfection whereof none can imagine; which, seeing it is so, I must do like those that want a clear sight, who, being not able to discern the sun in the sky, are enforced to behold it in the water."

At the age of 25 Lyly composed the work by which he is best known. It first appeared in 1580 in two parts,

* The orthography of this name is not uniformly the same. In some authors the spelling is Lilly, and in others Lillie. This, however, can lead to little or no confusion, since they all refer to the same writer.

each with a different title, the first being "Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit," and the other, "Euphues and His England." It is said to have been written for the special delight of the court ladies and their friends, and was hailed with a burst of admiration, and the name of his hero was given to the new literature and the "new language." We speak of Euphuism to this day as indicating excessive affectation in the use of language and a high-flown style of conversation, that is ridiculed by Sir Walter Scott in the speech of *Sir Piercie Shafton*, a character in "The Monastery." Lyly's aim was to go beyond everything practiced by the most learned, the most affected, or the most florid in decorating his thoughts. In carrying out this plan he invented a kind of composition that we can scarcely conceive of as having been used by people of common sense. Tedious from its excessive prolixity, and disfigured by the most puerile vanity and strained analogies, it contained little information, and nothing that has been useful to succeeding generations of authors. The most insignificant occurrence is compared by Euphues to everything else he can think of. He says, for instance, with reference to something he has seen: "The toad is hideous, but it has a beautiful stone in its head; gold is only found in the muddy earth, the sweet almond in a hard shell, and virtue in the heart of man that his fellowmen often take for deformity. Do you not find the most terrible poisons in painted vases, the largest serpents in the greenest verdure, and the ugliest toads in the clearest water?" and the sentence is padded out with half a dozen similar comparisons equally forced and equally false. Mysterious phrases and studied combinations are alone con-

genial to this style in preference to the simple narrative form of the *Utopia*, which preceded it in the early part of the century. The *Utopia*, however, was composed in Latin, and could not have served Lyly as a prototype for his fiction, which was written in English, and was, therefore, the first prose romance that appeared in our mother tongue. If we pass a severe censure upon its style, we must allow him much credit for originality and boldness, as the literature of his own country afforded no models. He relied upon his own inventions and struck out for himself his own imaginative offspring. With him begins the romance of manners, of passions, and the interests of living men. He speaks no more of Arthur, Charlemagne, Lancelot, and their prodigious companions; nor does he speak, as in *Utopia*, of an ideal state of society, inferior only to that of Paradise. He describes men who were his contemporaries, and things and ways that bear a resemblance to the realities of his age. His judgment of language, his views of men, and his analysis of sentiments are not very well grounded, but we cannot too highly appreciate the awkwardness of a first trial.

It is true that Sir Thomas Malory's "*La Morte d'Arthur*" was of an earlier date, and was, as some allege, the first book in prose that Caxton published in England. It was, however, only a compilation of the legendary tales about Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Lyly was also undoubtedly familiar with the short novels of Boccaccio, that Hallam thinks were the best written stories of the age; and, further, it has been surmised that the strange language of the "*Euphues*" was of Spanish importation, from the fact that in 1532

Lord Bernier had translated a Spanish book, which was full of the same kind of ingenious comparisons, borrowed from natural history and the supposed virtues and attributes of plants and stones. The French stories of the 12th and 13th centuries had become acclimated in England, for the Anglo-Normans delighted in tales of knight-errantry. But after all it was Lyly who first wrote an original romance in English prose describing the actual details of current life. It has not been reprinted since the reign of Charles I. The literature of English fiction was regenerated by Richardson and Fielding; they were supplanted by the essayists like Addison and Steele, and sentimentalists like Sterne and Johnson, who in their turn gave place to the romantic school of Sir Walter Scott; and next came the largeness, the richness of incident, the fineness of observation, and the attractive realism of the modern novel as we know it today.

Euphues is the story of a young Greek of that period who undertakes a journey to Naples and then to England in order to study mankind and their governments. Instructed by what he has observed, he addresses a series of letters to his friends, in which he relates his experience and discusses the duties of marriage, the education of children, and the study of religion. These letters are connected by descriptions and observations, which constitute the text of the book, and they inculcate the purity of love, as if he were the mental progenitor of Grandison, and the education of children, as if he spoke from the experience of Ascham, in his book of "The Schoolmaster." In the second part of his romance he has come into England

with his companion Philautus. They are both charmed with the country, which has a queen beautiful as Venus, more chaste than Vesta, and with a nobility of which he says: "The lords and gentlemen of that court are also an example for all others to follow—true types of nobility, the only stay and staff of honor; brave, courteous, stout soldiers, apt to revel in peace and ride in war; in fight fierce, not dreading death; in friendship firm, not breaking promise; courteous to all that deserve well, cruel to none that deserve ill. Their adversaries they trust not—that showeth their wisdom; their enemies they fear not—that argueth their courage. They are not apt to proffer injuries, not fit to take any; loath to pick quarrels, but longing to revenge them."

For ten or twelve years Euphues was the fashion, and all who piqued themselves on their elegance, spoke in his affected language, and learned from his book their ideas of natural history and their forms of pedantic expression. Wise people scolded, and Nash scoffed in vain; and Shakespeare makes Falstaff admonish the king derisively in the inflated language of the court. The reading of the book was current until the reign of Charles I., when it ceased to be reprinted. Its influence, however, extended far beyond the brief period of its glory. The first impression would be that Sidney, a few years later, had crammed a good many euphuistic derivatives into his elegant and refined prose. The following extract may be considered a fair example:

"A happy couple: he joyed in her, she joying to herself, but in herself, because she joyed in him; both increased their riches by giving to each other; each making one life double, because they

made a double life one ; where desire never wanted satisfaction, nor satisfaction ever bred satiety ; he ruling, because she would obey, or rather, because she would obey, she therein ruled."

Even "rare old Ben" could not guard himself against the contagion. As an instance, take the following passage from a speech of one of the *dramatis personæ* in his play of "Bartholomew Fair," acted in the year 1614. He was arguing that a wise man ought not to abandon a public good design on account of a particular disaster. I preserve the orthography of the original :

"The husbandman ought not for one unthankful yeer, to forsake the plough. The Shepheard ought not for one scabb'd sheep to throw up his tar-boxe. The pilot ought not for one leake i' the poope to quit the Helme ; nor the Alderman ought not for one custerd more at meale to give up his cloake. The Constable ought not to breake his staffe and forswear the watch for one roaring night ; nor the piper o' the Parish (*ut parvis componere magna solebam*) to put up his pipes for one rainy Sunday," etc.

And Dr. Johnson, at the distance of a century afterwards, was strongly tinctured with the same false kind of antitheses, which abound in his overloaded style. Even Tennyson has occasionally a touch of the old conceit, as—

"His honor, rooted in dishonor, stood,
And faith, unfaithful, kept him falsely true."

The burlesque pieces exhibited on the modern stage teem with examples of this play upon words, and the merits of the play, if it has any, are forgotten in the admiration of the perversion of the sense of words.

These ridiculous images and ornaments of speech at the outset afforded Nash a subject of invective and satire, and had not escaped the agreeable wit of Shakes-

peare himself. The strong, plain Saxon-English of Dryden and Defoe at length restored just and natural modes of expression; and now it is futile to search standard authors for this unnatural manner of speaking or writing, and the change in language and style appear nowhere to more advantage than in the standard English novel of the present time. They are more numerous than those of any other country, and enjoy greater favor even than those of France and Germany. Surely Lyly, who was the first to lead the way to English fiction, is entitled to a special place in the history of our literature and language, since books of fiction now exceed in number the combined publications in theology, philosophy, science, and history.

The origin of English fiction in prose has been also ascribed to Thomas Nash, an indefatigable dramatist, pamphleteer, and wit, and also the author of the novel "Jack Wilton." Others think that the fiction of real life commences with Defoe. Lyly was fourteen years older than Nash, and his book had appeared not less than that period before Jack Wilton. Defoe was nearly a century later.

To display the circumstances that influence the forms of language, we must resort to the expressional methods which prevailed at the time to be considered, bearing in mind that all changes are usually the product of agencies that are not consciously created. They come from the experience and necessities of mankind, from the advancing arts of life, and from the pursuit of human activities. "Custom," says Ben Jonson, "is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money." The impulse given

to English letters during the early years of Elizabeth came from the fashion ; beautiful garments gave rise to beautiful words and to an elegant and swelling diction. The Italian and Spanish influence had infected the taste of the court ; and the courtiers and parasites seemed to have laid in wait for new words and strange forms of expression. No education was deemed complete without visiting the Continent and witnessing the fading glories of the Italian Renaissance. It is among the certainties that English became somewhat tinctured with the manners and colloquial phrases acquired abroad. Along with the dramatists and poets of the English Renaissance were other writers, and among them Lodge and Greene, who wrote novels and an endless variety of pamphlets in the affected style of Euphues. The Jack Wilton of Nash was on the other hand written in a natural flowing style and in the racy vernacular familiar to the people ; it had a most salutary tendency in favor of pure English, and is thought to be the most complete romance in English previous to those of Richardson. Literature had done little for the cultivation of our language during the dull interval since Geoffrey Chaucer had kindled the sacred fire of his poesy, but the people loved it. It was the plain and ordinary speech of their daily life. They had played a mighty though silent part since the Canterbury Tales appeared. They had enriched their native dialect with many energetic words, and moulded it into grammatical and even syntactical flexibility, so that it was said that the common people of London spoke a purer idiom than was heard from the same class in any continental city where language had been most cultivated. It is also to

be remembered that the songs and ballads of the people had been one of the strongholds of our mother tongue throughout the whole period of this literary gloom. The songs of the people had been from the earliest Saxon times. The Saxon swine-herd sang them in the stable when Cædmon withdrew for shame that he was the only one who could not sing. The words in which these simple melodies are expressed are taken from the local dialects, but are held in favor by all ranks; even the accomplished and fastidious Sidney never heard sung nor read the ballad of "Chevy Chase" without feeling his blood stirred in every vein. The "Folk Songs" have no known origin. Those which celebrate the exploits of "Robin Hood," which are still popular, were probably composed by men who could not write their names, and their authors are forgotten. Men and maidens sang ballads, they were heard at merry-makings, around the May-pole, at social and festive assemblies, in the streets, in the fields, and on the sea. They were known by heart by one generation, and transmitted to the children of their love as a charming and precious heritage. They are found in all regions of the earth. I remember that when in the Indian country I heard an old Indian humming slowly what, not being an Indian, I could not understand, but which, undoubtedly, was a song of his tribe.

Great numbers of these pieces have been collected in England, and the airs which accompany them have been made, as we are told, the bases of grand musical compositions. Such is said to be the fact in the opera of "Le Desert," and the comic one of "Lallah Rookh." The Greeks combined poetry, danc-

ing, and music. Homer was a singer, and Pindar made odes and set them to music, and danced them with a lyric troop in honor of the gods around the altar of Bacchus. All the music of the Greeks came from this origin, and was placed under the protection of the children of Jupiter. Ballads at the time referred to existed in England and Scotland by the hundreds and, perhaps, by the thousands. The minstrelsy of the "Scottish Border" is replete with the glowing myths and golden legends of the olden time, and the tales of wars and superstitions are embalmed in Mediæval song. The inhabitants of that romantic region down even to this day retain something of the wild and mystic traditions which gave the bard a welcome greeting to cottage fireside and castle hall. The songs were stored up in the minds of the people and kept alive for centuries by recitations and singing. Some one has said, "let me make the songs of a people and I care not who makes their laws." However true this may have been with regard to government, they constituted to a much greater extent the body and soul of our language at the period of which we speak, and they can only cease to be "interesting with the existence of our mother tongue, and all that genius and learning have recorded in it."

But the Renaissance brought a race of writers in every species of composition, and our speech at once displayed the inherent principle of its vitality. The influences which had operated in Italy a century and a half before, were only now coming into full force in the home of our ancestors. The dramatists appeared first, and fortunately they had all received the benefit of uni-

versity training, but were imbued with a passionate love for their native tongue. In this spontaneous outburst of tragical harmony, society did but little, and genius did everything. The first of these writers had neither ancestry, opulence, nor courts to befriend them. Penury was their birthright, toil their profession, and genius their only patron. They led a gay and reckless life, and died while young in want and misery. Marlowe breathed his last when he was not yet thirty, in 1593, from an injury received in a tavern brawl. Greene at the age of thirty-two was buried by a poor shoemaker who had from compassion afforded him shelter in his last moments. Nash was not over thirty at the time of his death. They wrote exclusively in English. Their phraseology was rugged and swelling, their thoughts were fresh and vigorous, their plots full of blood and thunder, and replete with strong situations and appalling catastrophies. It was the first wild wave of the English Renaissance, rolling in upon the awakened spirit, foam-crested, and breaking on the shore with furious explosions. The evenness of spirit and temper soon appeared in Sidney, in Massinger, in Beaumont and Fletcher. It was not before the days of Waller (1605-1687) that there was anything comparable to the gentle, measured flow of transparent verse in the style of Dryden and Pope.

It may not be amiss to introduce the following stanzas, entitled "The School," taken from some small poems in the "Book of Demeanor," written about 1619. Shakespeare had been dead two years, but Jonson was still alive; and perhaps it represents better than either of these authors the early forms of Modern English:

Stand straight upright, and both thy feet
Together closely standing,
Be sure on't ever let thine eye
Be still at thy commanding.

If thou doe give or fill the drinke
With duty set it downe,
And take it back with manlike cheere,
Not like a rustick sowne.

If on an errand thou be sent
Make haste, and do not stay,
When all have done, observe the time,
Serve God and take away.

When thou hast done and dined well,
Remember then repaire
To school again with cheerfulness,
Be that thy chiefest care.

There is not a word, and scarcely the form of a word, that a good writer would decline to adopt today as good English. The Saxon Runes have disappeared, the letters are all in our alphabet, and the dropping of a letter, such as final *e*, would make it entirely modern.

Thanks to the early authors just mentioned, the language was now moulded into shape. The Anglo-Saxon inflexions had disappeared, the only trace left being the genitive case of nouns, as in the example, *princes home*, denoting possession, for which we have substituted simply the possessive sign. Their words can be assimilated to our present vocabulary by dropping or adding a letter to the antiquated form when they differ from our own orthography. The changes in the ends or body of words to limit or extend their sense are such as we are familiar with today; and we find the same abundance of particles bristling upon every page of our modern

authors. We can easily read and understand what they have written, excepting terms that have become obsolete in the course of three centuries. Their grammar numbered the same parts of speech, and the article was finally received into English etymology to stay. The substantive was strangely divided into a noun and an adjective, a distinction still maintained by some grammarians, under the compound term of a substantive adjective; the genders of nouns were founded upon the natural distinction of sex, and the arbitrary application of the Latin and Anglo-Saxon discarded. The plural of nouns was formed by adding *s* to the singular, with the exception of those in *en*, as in the instance of *ox*, *oxen*, *woman*, *women*, *child*, *children*. The pronouns, of course, follow the rules applicable to the nouns they represent.

The correct use of the verb is a subject of the greatest importance, and it is often very difficult to decide what shade of distinction ought to be made. Even in the present state of our grammar the use of the second person singular of the indicative is continually undergoing controversy; and the writings of professional authors upon the general grammatical structure of the verb, if not the language itself, is the constant object of criticism. These criticisms go far to convince us that bad language is worse than bad English, and that probably no one has yet written perfect English, and that no one probably ever will until the language shall become dead and petrified. This much is certain, that the early works of Modern English furnish us with indubitable evidence that the regular verb had assumed its simple form and relations by which to express time present, past, and

future, and its accord in person and number with its subject. This is worthy of notice, since at that early day there had been but one English grammar in existence.

Previous to 1510 no writer on English grammar had appeared. At that date William Lily, a teacher in St. Paul's School, London, wrote and published an English grammar for the use of his school. It seems from all accounts that several other persons had written, or were about to write, upon the same subject, either for profit or distinction. All competition, however, was summarily suppressed by the intervention of Henry VIII. Lily's Grammar was patented by the crown, and was, therefore, familiarly known as King Henry's Grammar, and the law commanded that it should be "adopted and taught as the common standard of grammatical instruction." It is affirmed that Dr. Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, one of the most accomplished scholars in England, as well as Erasmus and other philologists, were valuable contributors to its composition. The king undertook to impose grammar as he had religion, and with almost the same success, for no grammar ever exercised a wider influence. For two hundred years it was taught in the public schools of England that were subject to the visitations of the bishops. Outside of their jurisdiction, it did not appear to have the force of law, for in 1586 William Bullokar published "A Brief Grammar for English," and in 1634 Ben Jonson produced "The English Grammar, made by Ben Jonson, for the benefit of strangers, out of his own observations of the English language now spoken and in use."

Whether these works embodied all the improvements that had been made, they certainly exhibit a structure

of language that is purely analytical and English, which is the English of today ; and with our indeclinables and adjectives having no genders, and with the simplest of all auxiliary verbs, it can only be through gross carelessness, or ignorance, that we can write so inartificially or ungrammatically as to convey an evident meaning that is not intended. Our errors are the result of corruptions, commencing almost habitually with the illiterate.

Such then was the noble and powerful idiom born of the struggle and hostility of five hundred years, that was placed at the disposal of English writers and speakers. The diffusion of Greek and Roman literature enriched it even at that early day with an influx of terms, which gracefully took their place in an English setting. And just here it may not be out of place to say something in regard to the derivation of Latin through the old Norman-French. The examination of a few words will illustrate the process. Take the Latin words *tempestas*, *descendo*, *maternus*, *affectio*, *progenies*, *cælestis*, *imploro*, *expiro*. Now these eight words have been changed into French without much change in their form and none in their meaning, as follows : *tempetes*, *descendre*, *maternale*, *affection*, *progeniture*, *celeste*, *implorer*, *expirer*. It turns out that all of these words are derived from the Latin, and that two thirds of the syllables are identical in orthography as well as meaning.

It is interesting to observe how these words will bear a like construction into English, as they originally did into French. Our sonorous vocables *tempest*, *maternal*, *celestial*, *progeny*, *affection*, and our verbs *implore* and *expire*, are all palpable transmutations of Latin words, and we discover that the French language is the inter-

secting medium of the operation. Indeed, these similarities are found to be so numerous as to pervade a very large proportion of the Latin terms in our language, and establish the probability that the English received them through the French crucible.

I have space to refer to only a very few examples of the words we derive directly from the Latin. The Latin word *populus*, for instance, stood long before the Romance parent of French existed, and even before the Christian era, for *people*, which it still means today. When after a thousand years it became chipped and ground to fit its Norman set-off, *peuple*, and was then Anglicized into *people*, after the lapse of a few additional centuries, no derivative adjective accompanied it in these long transformations. Direct recourse was, therefore, had to the fountain of classical Latin, and *popular* was formed directly from *popularis*, and the adverb *popularly* was also formed directly from the Latin word *popularites*; and these again gave birth to other nouns, *popularity*, *populace*, *populous*, *population*, *populousness*. Another instance of this sort of transfer also took place in the various conjugates of *ennemi*, in French first, then into *enemy*, English; but being without a corresponding adjective or adverb, these were transplanted at need from the Latin vocabulary; *inimical*, *inimically*, and *inimicality* are from the Latin word *inimicus* and were taken from it directly. Another of the most apparent examples of this creation of words can be found in the term *parish*. It is merely the French *paroisse* in the form of *paroisie* assimilated to an English dress. But its adjective, *parochial*, is incontestably the crude image of *parochialis* deprived of its terminal syllable; the trunk

is there, but some of the twigs are left off. Its offspring does not, however, stop here; for we have verbs like *parochialize*, nouns like *parochiality*, *parochian*, and an adverb, *parochially*, which are all Latin throughout. Here the substantives at first were derived from Norman-French, and conformed, perhaps gradually and imperceptibly, to the requirements of English grammar; by simply changing some of the letters and cutting off the case endings of the Latin declensions, they have become thoroughly naturalized, and are admitted to unquestioned citizenship. And by now forming their adjectival and adverbial compounds, we have enriched our language with many beautiful and significant words. Many of these words, though much changed in form, can be easily traced back to their origin, and the process by which this is accomplished is not without historical interest. The word *mob* has been referred to by Mr. Trench as one of this character. In the time of Charles II. the rabble were called *mobile vulgus*, a multitude swayed hither and thither by each gust of caprice, of passion or of doctrine, either true or false, the latter most frequently. The appellation *mobile vulgus* was abbreviated into a monosyllable, and hence, *mob* is not only a most expressive word in our day, but has a legal definition and great phonetic crispness. Similar in their history are those of the words *sham*, *incog*, and others, once avoided by the fastidious, but at last, like parvenu families, are provided with escutcheons, and keep company with the noblest words in the language.

I suspect it was this readiness to adopt new words from the Latin which induced Ben Jonson, who was a contemporary of Shakespeare, to utter those sensible

reflections to be referred to in a subsequent chapter, and the same tendency has called forth even at the present time severe censure from those who seek to preserve the language from modern corruptions. Dr. Angus in his hand-book points out twelve Latin words which enter into the composition of nearly 2,500 English words, and one hundred and fifty-four Greek and Latin primitives yield nearly 13,000 words, and the aggregate of Latin terms and compounds will amount to not less than twenty or thirty thousand. We must remember that the native richness of our tongue is not our sole reliance in the machinery of expression, but we seize upon every philological aid to thought more than any other people. The copious grammatical forms of the Latin, the shades of meaning they express, the nicety of distinction they evince, are often called to our assistance when absolute correctness and subtilty of thought are to be expressed, or a passage is to be distinguished by lofty and energetic eloquence. One of our American scholars (Mr. Lowell), maintains that our language has gained immensely, by the infusion of Latinisms, in the richness of synonyms, and in power of expressing nice shades of thought and feeling. Yet amidst the constant accretion of classical neologisms, the Saxon element of our language has lost nothing of its power. It is the basis of its strength, and none of its terms have been crowded into permanent desuetude by their classical associates.

Previous to the year 1528 all the words of Latin origin betray in their form that they came through the old Norman-French. After that date the literature of Greece and Rome became diffused by means of the press, and manuscripts were no longer the narrow and preca-

rious sources of learning for English students, who resorted directly to the originals for such classical terms as they needed. This resulted in a great influx from the remains of antiquity, which entered the language of the day without the intervention and in spite of the Norman-French; and for two centuries authors bearing the greatest names in our literature were in the habit of using Latin derivatives, when, perhaps, the vernacular could have supplied counterparts equally distinct, forcible, and precise. Hooker, Sir Thomas Brown, Bacon and Milton, and others of a later date, especially Hume and Robertson, Johnson and Gibbon, are often blamed for the large proportion of terms that compose their works adopted from a classical source. But these authors probably resorted to Latin for what they deemed sufficient reasons, and first and foremost among them was what they considered an excellent one: that their own vernacular tongue was not fully fixed and uniform. But they all understood the dead languages, and were emulous to display the elegance of their Latinity. Remember that Bacon and Milton wrote some of their chief works in that language entirely. The result shows how mistaken they were in the estimate of their own tongue, that has become the most copious and powerful idiom in Europe. It is not really surprising that in view of these circumstances so many Latin terms have crept into our vocabulary, and that these have never exercised any influence upon the form of grammar of our native tongue; and that it holds today its dominion and use against all the pilgrims from other ages and other lands that have procured a passport to our dictionaries.

CHAPTER X.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED.

SHAKESPEARE.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. His Education. | 5. His Influence. |
| 2. His Tragedies and Comedies. | 6. His Versification. |
| 3. His Sonnets. | 7. His Present Position. |
| 4. His Language. | |

WE now come to a great man and probably the greatest name in English poetry—William Shakespeare. This singular genius was born in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon (1564). His parents were of humble position, and were unable to educate their son in any of the higher branches of learning. He received such training as the humble school in the village could afford, and no more conspicuous example could be cited to show the force of native genius. When a young man he committed an offense against the game laws, for which he was tried before the now celebrated justice of the peace, Sir Thomas Lucy, upon whose lands the trespass had been committed, and the youthful culprit has immortalized his name and memory in a pasquinade that he stuck upon a tree in the immediate neighborhood where he lived. This so enraged Sir Thomas that he was about to pursue him with still greater terrors of the law, when Shakespeare, fearing his resentment,

withdrew from the place and went up to London to push his fortune. Upon his arrival there he met an old friend who introduced him to the manager of the Globe Theatre, then the most famous resort for the fashion of the day. He there formed an acquaintance with Lord Southampton, a youth of about his own age, and it ripened into a friendship for life. This nobleman proved, indeed, to be a sincere friend on more than one occasion. When the Venetian ambassadors visited London it was he who introduced them to Shakespeare, and thus, no doubt, gave the poet many hints which he afterwards wove into his Italian plays. He was also through the same influence introduced at court, and played before the queen in several pieces, but whether they were his own is not known. He also appeared before the queen on several occasions when she passed in the royal barge upon the river on her way to the Tower, but whether she observed or distinguished him by any mark of recognition is not mentioned. It does not appear that he derived any personal or pecuniary benefit from the royal bounty. Elizabeth was meanly penurious, and probably Shakespeare received only the usual dole extended to others for the same kind of work.

When the time came for Shakespeare to write a play, we can almost in imagination see him retire to a small house he may have rented on the Strand, and where he occupied apartments which would now be considered mean and uncomfortable ; and here surrounded by nothing but a small collection of books, a few chairs, and a plain deal table, he prepared many of those magnificent pieces that have since delighted mankind. He seldom had occasion to correct his composition, and the words

and figures came trooping like the birds on a beautiful spring morning, fresh from the vales of Helicon. He was a great reader of fairy tales, and constructed some of his plays out of their gossamer ideals; he also read the old histories of England in Holinshed and the stories of the crusades out of Froissart. He spoke no language but his own, and was often engaged in that most delightful study of arranging old English words one after the other in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of its resources. There is a tradition that he was also in the habit of sitting for hours at a time on the old chair that had been occupied by Chaucer when he composed his *Canterbury Tales*, and he was fond of saying that he enjoyed communion with that poet in the open light of day when he was weary of work and could not rest anywhere else. He had a great taste for the sonnets of Spenser, and would often try to imitate them, and did, indeed, produce quite a number of sonnets that prove him beyond all doubt a true poet, even if he had written nothing more. He was often found in the tavern, where he met men like Ben Jonson, with whom he was on intimate terms of friendship, and discussed the topics of the day, not forgetting the stage in which they were all interested. Some time after he came to London he made the acquaintance of Ben Jonson, and they were always the best of friends; and this would seem to establish beyond all doubt that he wrote the dramas which bear his name, since old Ben bears witness to his authorship, and declares that he was a man of the most genial temper and pleasing address. We are, therefore, at liberty to claim for Shakespeare that he wrote the plays, since so competent a witness testifies to the fact. We

are also much more impressed with the truth of this claim when we consider that Jonson was himself the greatest dramatist of the day after Shakespeare, and was evidently not entirely free from a feeling of jealousy. When, therefore, it is thought fit by some to charge that Shakespeare was not the author of his own productions, it is necessary for them to show that Jonson was playing as great a farce himself, for he always spoke of Shakespeare as the greatest living poet.

It seems almost impossible to classify the works of Shakespeare. He is so various and universal that he covers all that we can think of, all that we can feel or know. There is such a breadth and copiousness in the overflowing fulness of his soul, that it is only necessary to speak of any subject and we find that he has exhausted it. There is no phase of human nature that he has not touched with his genius and embellished with his fancy. If we would ask any man for a thought of profound meaning, he has already made it familiar by an apt expression or a happy metaphor. If you wish to express the secret of love, read "Romeo and Juliet"; if you would express the glory of ambition, read the interview between Mark Antony and the crowd of citizens he harangues over the dead body of Cæsar; if you would express the emotion of fear, read the tent scene in Richard III. when Banquo's ghost appears in his dreams; if you would realize the dreadful frenzy of delirium, read "King Lear," and if you would ponder on the ruin of a great mind under the influence of remorse, read the tragedy of "Macbeth." Indeed, there is no sympathy, no sentiment, no passion, no affection, that he has not vivified and placed in some striking episode,

displayed in some terrible outburst of feeling, or in some appalling and tremendous paroxysm. The love of woman was never more finely delineated than in the passage where *Ophelia* speaks to *Hamlet* of the remembrances she had received from him and of her desire to return them to him. She expresses only the divinest confidence in her own soul and in her infinite love for the man who rejects her; and even when the heart-broken child is

“ Divided from herself, and her fair judgment,”

she speaks so simply and with such unaffected feeling that one is persuaded the scene is real and the unhappy maiden a person of life and not a fiction. So when the king is sent into exile, as is the case with Henry VI., we feel that the whole transaction is like a passage from a book of genuine history. The monarch comes upon the stage without his crown or his royal robe, and speaks of the vicissitudes of life, and we feel that the king is there himself, and that the sentence which deprives him of his throne is indeed a matter of reality. When Julius Cæsar takes the trouble thrice to wave the proffered crown aside, we see the multitude and look upon the great Roman as if we were part of the people who pressed him to accept the emblem of royalty. When the grim and ghastly shroud of King Edward is stopped on the way to the Tower, we can almost imagine that we are present and hear the loud summons of Gloucester to lay down the burden, and it shall be his care to provide the proper obsequies, and when he seizes the shrinking hand of the queen, we can feel the shudder that passes through her veins. So it is in all the great scenes that fill these wonderful productions. We are

conscious of a feeling that all is passing before us in the open light of truth, and we do not recover from the illusion till we are fairly out of sight and hearing of the performance. When the object of Shakespeare is to produce the strongest effect upon the imagination, he generally sweeps down upon the scene with a surprising and extraordinary vision of grandeur, or despair, as when we see King Lear dethroned, uncrowned, and left desolate among the rocks, his white hair streaming in the storm, and when the golden circle is placed upon the brow of Goneril, she is as suddenly brought to a miserable end by falling into the pit she had dug for her sister's ruin. The hope of a lifetime was realized only to be dashed into pieces almost as soon as it was reached. In all the tragedies there is a grandeur in the conception and a power of language in the expression that enchants the soul. What is grander than the reply of Marcellus to the rabble that assailed him with abuse, or the oration of Mark Antony over the dead Cæsar. The great charm in all these and similar passages is the simplicity of the words, the beauty of the sentiment, and the wonderful pathos that can be produced by means so truthful and so unadorned. It is the perfection of language, and the most exalted sentiments of love, respect, and obedience, combined with the grandest emotions and the noblest ideas. All the tender scenes are equally fine in their way. But, perhaps, the grandest of all these episodes is that of Coriolanus when he exclaims, "O, mother, thou hast lost a son, but saved Rome." The feeling here is genuine, the language natural and plain, but the effect is overwhelmingly tender and affecting. The mother, a Roman matron of high birth and charac-

ter, has volunteered to visit the tent of her son in order to save the city from the sword of the conqueror. Her own son leads the hostile forces that beleaguer the doomed city of Rome, and he is about to enter its portals with an army of barbarians. The moment is one of unexampled terror, the populace is aroused by the appalling danger, and the citizens grow pale at the dreadful extremity. There is no help at hand, no power that can come to their relief. But on a sudden a woman appears before the senate, and asks permission to pass through the gates. She will go to the camp of the enemy, and seek audience with its victorious general. She will throw herself at his feet, and ask for peace. With a mother's voice and a mother's tears she will implore her son, her boy that she nourished and reared to manhood, to save the city of his birth and of her home from the sword of the destroyer. She feels that she cannot fail. She is sure that the gods will at least protect her while on a mission so sacred. The senate yields to her entreaties, and the guard is ordered to give free passage. She issues from the fortress nearest to the hostile camp, and alone passes into the arena of war to conquer a foe that is about to enter the eternal city and lay waste its treasures and its homes. She has no weapons but a mother's love and a mother's tears, but with these she subdues the heart of the great warrior, and brings back peace and safety to Rome. Coriolanus goes back to captivity and death. The Volcians cannot forgive what seems to them his perfidy, and the scene ends with his death and funeral. A more striking instance of the power of maternal love and influence is not to be found anywhere; and this

grand event is told so simply and so unaffectedly that one is astonished at the grandeur of the conception as much as at the wonderful effect produced by a few words that might have been uttered by any ordinary speaker of our language.

This is a secret that Shakespeare possessed beyond any other dramatic writer. He could produce the most unexpected and brilliant effects by the most unforeseen expedients. When the queen asks *Hamlet*, for his father's sake, to leave off his mourning habit and assume a more pleasant humor, he only replies that he is sick of court pastimes and would prefer to be left out on all occasions of festivities. The queen sees at once the covert reproach upon her own conduct in so soon forgetting her duty to his father. So when the Venetian senator sees the marriage of his daughter to the Moor already consummated, he leaves the room where the court is sitting to try *Othello* for having charmed her with drugs or witchcraft, and abjures her as his child, and vows that he will never again trust woman's innocence. But the most striking instance of this kind is when Cæsar conducts the war against Mark Antony and the Egyptian queen. He is not insensible to her charms, and desires to make her the grand central figure of his triumphal entry into Rome. He sends her greeting, and instructs his messengers to ask her what fair demands she means to have him grant her, but all their flatteries cannot captivate the great soul of the beautiful queen, who in a rage of frenzy places the deadly asp upon her heart and expires almost before their eyes. The tragic details are all brought about by means the most natural and simple. It is a master mind working

up unusual means into the most appalling results.

It is often said that Shakespeare did not invent his plots. This is true. He took his plots wherever he could find them, and like all the poets of his time never gave credit to the source from which he obtained them. In our day this would be called plagiarism, but in the days of Shakespeare it was a common practice. He stole from the writers of Early English his story of King Lear, and the plot of the drama of Macbeth from Holinshed. He took the whole narrative of Julius Cæsar from a play on the same subject, written two or three years previously by William Alexander, afterwards Lord Sterling, and founded the tragedy of "Titus Andronicus" upon the story of an old play written by a Greek author who lived in the days of Roman decay. There were, however, no particular literary thefts committed, for the reason that he made the stories his own, inspired them with new life, and poured into them the vivid energy and fire of his genius, so that what was tame and mediocre in other men's hands became grand and immortal when touched with the promethean spark from his imagination.

It is a curious fact, illustrative of certain points of similarity in the Elizabethan dramatists, that plagiarism, which in these days is regarded as a disgraceful theft, was then a common practice. Borrowing, transferring, and conveying may be traced in the works of all but Marlowe. He did not steal because there was no one to rob, but many obscure offenders stole from him. Then some worked together, hunted in couples; Beaumont, who understood French, Spanish, and Italian, worked with Fletcher, and after Beaumont's death

Fletcher worked with Shakespeare. Much of "Henry VIII.," "Timon of Athens," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Henry VI." has been traced to Fletcher, and some of "Richard III." to Peele.

It is true that the greater part of this excellence was the product of his own genius. The English stage was low enough in his day. I doubt if any essays upon tragedy or comedy had appeared, or if character and dialogue were understood. It was a transition period from the moralities and interludes to regular tragedy. George Gascoigne, one of the writers contemporary with the reign of Mary Tudor, had translated several of the ancient tragedies, particularly three or four of Euripides and one or two of Æschylus. Possibly Shakespeare derived some knowledge of character and dialogue from these examples. But that was not the form of either character or dialogue which imitated conversation and gave the air of common discourse. The ancient dialogue was too didactic for his use. It was more like, for instance, the dialogue of "Horne Tooke," in the diversions of Purley, or Fontenelle, on the plurality of worlds. This form of dialogue is not very well calculated to enliven a subject by brilliant sallies and sparkling repartee. The dialogue of the drama is written conversation, keeping up a running connection between plot and character, taking color from the scene like chit-chat, and manifesting emotions and sentiments that seem to effervesce spontaneously from the mind. The stage is peopled with the most incongruous beings, and it is imperative that each should speak in his own characteristic style. Kings and nobles, clowns and knaves, soldiers and citi-

zens compose the scene; they converse and must be uniform and consistent throughout the entire piece, each being distinguished by his own tone and sentiment.

The arrangement of the Greek drama could furnish still less instruction on the subject of character. The personages were generally taken from their mythology, and the incidents related to events in their fabulous antiquity. On the other hand, Shakespeare drew his characters from true history, or else they were the fictitious offspring of his own exuberant fancy. He created characters for the representation of human life. He was, therefore, under the necessity of making them consistent, although he colored them with the iridescent hues of fiction, and introduced them into an imaginary existence, full of grand and thrilling episodes. I am not aware that there were at that period any means of instructing these efforts of the imagination. Marlowe, who was a little before Shakespeare, approached this art and prepared the way; and, going still further back, we find the first English tragedy ever exhibited was at the court of Elizabeth, in the year 1561, just three years before Shakespeare's birth. It took its name from one of the principal characters, *Gorboduc*, who gave to each of his two sons one half of his kingdom. They become enemies. The youngest kills the oldest, the mother stabs the survivor, and the infuriated populace rush into the palace and massacre the king, *Gorboduc*, and his implacable wife, and the whole family disappears in blood. The queen was pleased. The Tudors liked blood even as the lion laps that of its prey. The effect of the play, we are told, was prodigious, and the excitement it evolved swept like a tidal wave over the

land. Marlowe, with a rich and potent inspiration, was the first to appear; he was accompanied with a concourse of lesser lights, and these again were followed by Beaumont, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and their contemporaries. Euripides was again translated into English, and the tragedies of Seneca were travestied in such a way that classical scholars failed to recognize them in their new dress.

That Shakespeare traveled in Italy is doubtful, but that he understood Italian and the conversation of Italians is certain. He transferred much from the Italian poets to his own store. The exquisite speech on reputation in "Othello," also, "Who steals my purse," etc., is said to be nearly literally from the "Orlando Inamorate." *Othello's* reference to the handkerchief which an "Egyptian did to my mother give," is from the "Orlando Furioso." The beautiful soliloquy on suicide and immortality, "To be or not to be," is stated in Langhorn's Preface to his "Plutarch" to have been taken verbatim from a Latin author, or possibly a translation from Plato. Froissart's and Holinshed's Chronicles were Shakespeare's chosen authorities for much of Henry V., VI., and even Richard II. and Macbeth. The Bible helped him essentially, especially the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Pentateuch, and the New Testament. He borrowed from Marlowe, and took King Lear from Layamon's Brut. The ballads and works of the lesser dramatists supplied him with material for characters like *Pistol*, *Silence*, and the clowns. Belief in ghosts, fairies, and witches abounded in Shakespeare's time, and of them, and the stories about them, he made great use in Macbeth, Hamlet, Mid-Summer Night's

Dream, Henry VI., and in *The Tempest*. But after all said and done about Shakespeare's debts to other writers, the fact so ably set forth by an accomplished American philologist, is undeniable—who says: "As soon expect to see a child without a father as an artist without an intellectual progenitor. He may not, indeed, have been the artist's master, as the child's nominal father may not have been his real one; but from some other mind comes the germ which he afterwards develops into originality. Shakespeare was no exception to the rule. He, sooner than any other creator in whatever department of art, broke away from the past and was himself alone; but he at first cast his thought in other men's moulds, and even his originality was rather in matter and in style than in substance."

He traces infancy and age how well! Recall young Arthur before Hubert, and the sons of Edward in the Tower. Whether in the sunshine of Verona or the mists of Elsinore, whether he portrays a wizard or a king, his action is simple, rapid, and engrossing. His dramatic heroes are real personages; whether he has created them, or resuscitated them, it is the same thing. He may choose *Macbeth*, or *Othello*, but he re-creates him. He breathes his soul into the man, he sweeps him along by the current of events, he groups around him circumstance and influence, he opposes him to sufferings and spells, he throws him into the midst of emergencies favorable or otherwise. The man conquers or is conquered, but it is always upon him that the interest centres. It is he who fills the scene, it is he whom we watch, whom we grieve for, whom we applaud or condemn, and it is he who provokes our scorn or our admiration. We

never lose sight of him, while the mere details of the story are only essential as accessories. He gives dramatic effect to some truth in philosophy in an unstudied metaphor. The well-known passage which occurs in the fifth act of *Macbeth* when the news is brought that the queen is dead, "Out! out! brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow!" The verb here is transitive, and conveys the idea of extinguishing the flame of life as if it were the glimmering of a fungus wick expiring in an old, battered socket. Another instance of the same kind occurs in *Hamlet's* first soliloquy in speaking of the world, "'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely."

Shakespeare's knowledge of the female sex in all that relates to their physique as well as to their feelings and intellectual power, is exemplified in his reference to what women endure in childbirth, in the course of more than one of his tragedies, in a fine vein of tenderness and delicacy. His just appreciation of the most refined courtly usage is conspicuous in the queen's acknowledgment to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*. The king thanks them individually for their visit, thus:

"Thanks, Rosencrantz, and gentle Guildenstern,"

and the queen adopts the opposite form of address, to guard against the appearance of slight or partiality, saying:

"Thanks, Guildenstern, and gentle Rosencrantz."

Indeed, no one has so well described woman and revealed her to herself as Shakespeare. Think of *Ophelia*, *Juliet*, *Desdemona*, and *Cordelia*, and many other types of love, jealousy, virtue, and pity, in whom are

revealed the life, the soul, the tenderness, and beauty of woman. He knows all, he animates all, and pours out the riches of his nature on the beautiful heroines of his imagination.

It has been objected by certain hypercritics that Shakespeare offended against the modesty of woman by making her appear in male attire. This objection defeats itself. In his day there were no women on the stage—all the female parts were, as in the days of Roscius, played by boys, and Shakespeare, therefore, seized every excuse for putting some beautiful, prominent character in the kind of dress boys could most suitably wear. It is not the fault of Shakespeare that modern actresses choose to dress themselves in such a manner as to expose their limbs to critical inspections. *Rosalind*, *Imogen*, *Viola*, *Portia*, *Jessica*, *Juliet*, and *Joan of Arc* all don male attire for purposes of disguise and travel, which involved no exposure whatever, for five of them would actually wear rough clothes and high boots to get through forests and other troubles, and to lie on the turf at night; two of them would be enveloped in lawyers' gowns, and one in complete armor. These beautiful sketches of women testify to his chivalrous respect for them, and his intense admiration and love for their character.

The most beautiful passages in Shakespeare are those where he speaks of love. It is here that his great soul seems to revel in delight. When *Juliet* tells *Romeo* that she is all the time in fear lest something should happen to him, and when he replies that nothing but good can happen to one she loves, the secret power of passion is revealed, and the confidence of hope and

youth are displayed in a manner that touches the soul with the glorious transports of a divine sentiment. When *Jessica* speaks with *Lorenzo* on the subject of their devotion, she says that all the birds sing of love, and all the stars glow with its splendor. When the gentle *Desdemona* asks the Moor to tell of his life's story, she exclaims, "Would that Heaven had made me such a man! If you have any friend can tell his love as you have told your story, I wish he were my brother." When *Juliet* speaks of love, it is as if the world were made of it, and would expire if left without it, and when *Romeo* falls down upon the ground to kiss her hand, it is as if that hand was like the hallowed shrine of a great Nature uttering its prayer of praise and blessedness.

It is not possible to give a more vivid picture of a woman who possesses the charm of beauty and the glory of love than in the closet scene of *Cleopatra* and her attendants. Here we have all the tints and shades of a deep and passionate nature. There is no room for any feeling but love, no thought of anything but the object beloved. When the moment comes for rest, there is no rest; when to sleep, there is no sleep. The whole being is taken up with one thought, and animated and transported by an all-consuming passion.

O Charmian,
Where think'st thou he is now?
Stands he, or sits he?
Or does he walk? or is he on his horse?
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!
Do bravely, horse! for wot'st thou whom thou mov'st?
The demi-Atlas of this earth, the arm
And burgonet of men.—He's speaking now,
Or murmuring, "Where's my serpent of old Nile?"
For so he calls me.

All these passages show how deeply the heart of the poet was touched when stirred up by the strongest sympathies of our nature.

But the most enchanting of Shakespeare's poems are the sonnets, that are so seldom referred to, and that are so exquisite in their melody and versification. There is no room here for uncertainty as to their authorship. No one has ever denied that Shakespeare wrote them. They are the effusions of a noble nature, and glow with the fire of a resplendent genius. No one can say that the sonnets are taken from other sources, and all must admit they are both original and poetic. When a man brings such a charge against the tragedies and comedies as that they are the work of another's brain, they will not dare to affirm that the sonnets are stolen from any source whatever. If, therefore, they are genuine, there are the strongest reasons for believing that the charge is not sustained when brought against the former. We, therefore, conclude that all the works bearing Shakespeare's name were written by him, except those plays that have been erroneously attributed to him.

We now come to consider his language and what position he occupies in the philology of our tongue. One of his greatest admirers has said of him that he uses English with the same degree of freedom that a man uses his own language when not expected to speak for himself, but for some one else. That is to say, he spoke it as if it did not belong to him and he could, therefore, use it with greater carelessness than he would if it were his own. This is apparent only, but I think that he probably used it with greater care than any

writer of his age, Bacon alone excepted, and perhaps Jonson. The language of Shakespeare is a matter of great concern, as he is the greatest among those who are supposed to have been the first to use its modern forms. Since the days of Chaucer there had been but few writers who had used the language in any form of dialect that approached the style of that author, or even added a single grace to its diction. Few had written it in prose, and but few in verse, and no one had spoken it, as far as we know, who had improved its forms, corrected its grammar, or displayed its versatility for the expression of thought or feeling. The great dramatists who were the contemporaries of Shakespeare had indeed written it in a way to show its power in portraying passion and in giving a new and potent charm to the stage. The prose writers of the same period had also displayed its energy and fine distinction in the description of character and the narration of events, but none of them had shown the wonderful capacity of our tongue for the most sublime expression of the emotions that spring up in the soul from great events, or when it is stirred by deep and profound sentiments. The whole literature of the period was marked by a spirit of levity and a looseness of morality that can be accounted for only by the debasement of the age. All the domestic virtues were matters for jest, if not absolute derision, and the easy and abandoned life of the men who wrote was a reflection of contemporary manners. It was not until Shakespeare arose out of the filth and slime of the period that letters came to their inheritance of pure and lofty expression, and our language put on its beautiful robes, and spoke

of love, ambition, virtue, religion, and domestic life in such terms as were suitable to the elevation of the manners and the character of mankind. When we remember that Shakespeare was of humble origin, that his early education was about on a level with thousands and tens of thousands of other Englishmen, we are astonished at the richness of his vocabulary, the splendor of his diction, and the grandeur of his periods. He speaks and you behold the noblest words marching on the scene as if they were out in their best array, and each one comes on so gracefully that you are led to believe the speech is the natural and spontaneous outburst of a mind laden with the burden of its thoughts, and overflowing with matchless terms to express them. All the resources of language appear to be exhausted in the grand characters he delineates. Take, for instance, his description of *Macbeth* when he meets the witches at their midnight orgies, and see how he weaves together the thought and the word, and how palpable he makes the weird and sombre cave, the sparkling fire and the boiling caldron hissing on the tripod as the dismal hags circle around, singing their hellish incantations over the murky air. The scene derives much of its power over the imagination by the vivid imagery of the language. And so in the place where *Romeo* speaks of his love as a thing too sacred for utterance, even to the stars as he stands under their dim and shadowy light. Indeed, wherever Shakespeare portrays a character or relates an event, the language adds the distinctness of reality to the most unsubstantial events; thus, where *Ophelia* learns that her father is dead and that his death takes from her the

only support on earth, how beautiful and yet simple the language by which he evokes the tenderest feelings of sympathy for the poor desolate orphan. No one can read the death scene in Richard III. without feeling that language could scarcely be used to produce a more ghastly effect, and when *King Lear* exclaims against the ingratitude of his daughters, we have the grandest explosion of passionate regret that language is capable of expressing. These examples will serve to illustrate the use which Shakespeare could make of a few Saxon words to produce the most marvelous results. The following passage selected from Part I., Henry IV., Act III., Scene II., is marked by the number of Saxon words, and nearly all of one syllable. It passes between the king and his son (Falstaff's Prince Hal). The king has reproached the prince for his disorderly behavior, and contrasted him with *Hotspur*, the son of *Percy*, who has already acquired "never dying honor" :

P. Hen. Do not think so; you shall not find it so;
And God forgive them, that have so much sway'd
Your majesty's good thoughts away from me !

I will redeem all this on Percy's head,
And in the closing of some glorious day,
Be bold to tell you that I am your son ;
When I will wear a garment all of blood,
And stain my favors in a bloody mask,
Which wash'd away shall scour my shame with it.

And that shall be the day, whene'er it lights,
That this same child of honor and renown,
This gallant Hotspur, this all-praised knight,
And your unthought-of Harry chance to meet.

For every honor sitting on his helm,
Would they were multitudes ; and on my head

My shames redoubled ! for the time will come,
That I shall make this northern youth exchange
His glorious deeds for my indignities.
Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf ;
And I will call him to so strict account,
That he shall render every glory up,
Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,
Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.
This, in the name of God, I promise here ;
The which if he be pleas'd I shall perform ;
I do beseech, your majesty may save
The long-grown wounds of my intemperance ;
If not, the end of life cancels all bands ;
And I will die a hundred thousand deaths,
Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow.

It is not improbable that the secret of this power lay in the fact that Shakespeare had always devoted much of his time to the selection of words and writing them down for future use. There is a hint to this effect in some of the biographical sketches. For instance, in Ben Jonson's praises of Shakespeare it is stated that he had a habit of noting down any unusual occurrence or remarkable event and preserving it for reference or use in his works, so it may have been his practice to write down such words as might strike his fancy for the same purpose ; at all events, that he made use of English as no one before him had done is one of the chief characteristics of his style. When he seeks to strike the imagination with some bold flight, or some lovely and gracious metaphor, how grandly his words correspond with the idea, as where *Mercutio* speaks of his wound, that it is not as deep as a well nor as wide as a barn door, but it will do,

there is a commonplace air about the terms, but how they at once carry the mind to the deadly nature of the injury, and at the same time reveal the joyous nature and cheerful temper of the soul that is about to take its flight above. So when he would touch the heart with an incident in common life, he uses no effort to sound the loud trumpet and call upon the feelings for an emotional display, but he tells it as a plain person would tell it.

Whenever Shakespeare's object is to produce an effect upon the mind by a sudden turn of expression, he does it by introducing some phrase that every one can understand, as when the gentle *Desdemona* is pleading for *Cassio* with the Moor he asks for the handkerchief that "An Egyptian to my mother gave," and thrice repeats the question with sudden and startling emphasis. Or when he wishes to astonish and captivate us by a single figure of speech, he makes the wretched Moor speak of his ruined hopes in three words, "Othello's occupation's gone." There is probably no grander passage in our language than that in which *Mark Antony* laments the death of *Cæsar*, unless it be that in which *Othello* addresses the council chamber in Venice. There is everywhere scattered through his works pieces of exquisite poetry, as in the play of "As You Like It," and many of the pieces are so interwoven with the plot that they cannot well be extracted from it. The great mastery of our language is perhaps better displayed in *Hamlet* than in any other of his productions. The soliloquy on suicide and the advice of *Polonius* to his son, may be referred to as showing a fitness of

terms and a purity of speech that reaches to the highest excellence, and may be compared with anything of the same kind in ancient or modern literature.

The influence of Shakespeare upon the language has not been overestimated. The direct way to overcome the difficulties of his early education was evident from the first drama he produced to the last. There were no sudden and extraordinary breaks in the series. All are distinguished by marks of his genius, but in no respect are they more so than in the Shakespearean style of his language. In this they stand alone. It is so peculiar that it has never been successfully imitated; and yet it is the simplest and plainest English. The most exquisite gems of his poetry are set in the sweet words of his mother tongue. We first remark upon the fact that the language is nearly pure Saxon—the greater portions of his words come from that source. He has, therefore, perhaps more than any other writer of his age, or of any succeeding age, given the language a Saxon type and energy. His love for old English is also remarkable. In many of his finest passages he uses almost exclusively Saxon terms, and appears to select them from a desire to be clear and strong, to be direct and expressive. The most beautiful passages in his poetry derive their peculiar charm from their Saxon simplicity. The effect has been very marked upon the subsequent texture of our speech. There has been no writer since his time who has not to some extent been influenced by this example; and even those who have most affected foreign idioms

and classical refinements have not failed to feel and express their admiration for the noble Saxon-English of Shakespeare. The greatest poet of the present day has not failed to clothe his finest conceptions in a Saxon dress, and his "In Memoriam," which is perhaps his most exquisite production, is expressed in Saxon monosyllables. The influence of a great writer upon his native tongue is felt long afterwards, and he continues to exert it upon others who succeed and stamp it still more firmly as the language of intelligence and literature. The most remarkable instance of this is Shakespeare himself. He has never ceased to influence our tongue. The school-boy continues to recite his pieces, the greatest tragedians to perform his plays, the lawyer cites his proverbial maxims, and the preacher illustrates his theme by a citation from his morals and philosophy. There is no calling that he has not written for, no profession that he has not practiced, and no employment that he has not dignified by his wise and prudent counsel. All classes of men find something in Shakespeare that explains or applies to their position, and every one feels honored by finding himself already sketched and identified among the wonderful creations of his genius. This universal spirit of Shakespeare carries his language into all the thoughts and converse of men. Literature, poetry, and philosophy feel the general influence and yield to its power. In this way it would be almost impossible to overestimate the influence of Shakespeare upon the English language.

Besides all this there are a great number of those who do not read his works who are under their influence,

and cannot escape the use of the language which he has done so much to establish in its present form. All who speak English may be unconscious of the influence that comes from his writings, but they would not speak as they now speak in all probability had he never lived, and they cannot tell how they would speak the language of their birth had he never written in it. It seldom falls to the lot of a man to mould the language of a people, or to give them a dialect for all the purposes of speech, and yet it is probably more from the influence of Chaucer and Shakespeare that our tongue is what it is, than from any other causes, and their influence will extend with it in its circuit round the globe. When a man wants an apt quotation or an unusually pointed remark, he will find it in Shakespeare all ready made, and so much better than he could do it himself that he adopts it at once. So if one wishes to follow out any line of thought, he looks into Shakespeare and will be sure to find himself rewarded by the most graceful and expressive mode in which it can be presented. All the maxims of men, all the theories of philosophy, all the questions of morals, all the motives of friendship, the duties of religion, and the obligations of virtue can be found in these works, scattered here and there in many forms, but always in good plain English speech, such as any one can understand and feel.

His influence upon our literature has been constantly felt. The great bulk of English literature belongs to the last two centuries. Previous to that time writers were poorly paid and poorly treated. The most of them were not recognized outside the

church, and the literature of the monks was mostly on religious topics, so that of secular literature there was little or none. About the time of Shakespeare a new era commenced. A number of writers appeared and wrote in English, after the manner of Chaucer, whom they all admired and imitated in using the vernacular. Their works are now seldom referred to, but for all that they constitute a bright galaxy in the history of English literature. Some of them were contemporary with Shakespeare, some just before, and some just after, as has already appeared. The ordinary reader scarcely ever hears of Marlowe, Massinger, Middleton, Rowley, Lyly, Nash, Lily (William), Green, and several others, who lived and wrote plays, and novels, and poetry; to say nothing of Ben Jonson, who was a personal friend, and Beaumont and Fletcher, who were co-workers with the poet himself. This extraordinary race of men appeared all at once, and disappeared at about the same time as Shakespeare, or soon afterwards. They were in some respects the rivals of Shakespeare, and one or two of them his enemies, who ridiculed his attempts at writing tragedies, and spoke of him as a pretender. It cannot be said that Shakespeare had any immediate influence upon his contemporaries, nor indeed could he have had, for only two or three of his pieces were published in his life-time, and it was not until seven years after his death that the first edition of his entire works appeared in print. From that time on his influence has been acknowledged by all the authors that have used the English tongue. In no case has the name and fame of Shakespeare suffered an eclipse, until three hundred and fifty years after

his death a claim is set up that he did not write the plays that bear his name. Even with this suspicion resting upon them, these wonderful productions exert as much influence as ever upon our language and literature. The Shakespearean dialect has not been preserved in the writings of later authors, simply for the reason that it is inimitable. No writer has been bold enough to try it more than once, for a single experiment has been sufficient to show its impossibility. And yet no man of letters will deny that the effect of that astonishing dialect has never ceased to be felt in all the ages since its appearance ; indeed, our literature is studded with Shakespearean gems. We cannot open a book on any subject of general interest that we will not find it adorned by his wise maxims and beautiful thoughts. We cannot go into a drawing room, a public building, a library, or a society for the promotion of human learning or well-being and not see his bust. Wherever we go, whatever we read, Shakespeare is the unfailing friend to welcome and cheer us. He stands at the door of the theatre, at the salon of the refined, in the gallery of art, in the workshop, in the factory, in the cottage, and in the palace, the ever present embodiment of genius, kindness, courtesy, and good-fellowship. His features are as familiar to us as are those of our nearest and best friends, and when we see any one who resembles him we feel a glow of pleasure and only wish that the poet were indeed again alive.

A general muster of all the words in the tragedies, comedies, and sonnets has been made by Mrs. Cowden Clark, who computes them by actual count at 15,000.

In this aggregate there are probably many repetitions, so that the real number may safely be reduced to 8,000 or 9,000. Down to the present time from 1,500 to 2,000 of these words have become obsolete or are obsolescent, and many have acquired a changed meaning, but this includes all those he established as well as those tentative words he devised, and which it appears the wants of the language never demanded as they have never taken root in it. Dr. Weisse has analyzed a passage from Hamlet containing 164 words, out of which forty-seven per cent. are particles and thirty-nine per cent. repetitions. In one hundred words of the same extract nine per cent. are Greek and Latin derivatives, twenty-three from the French, fifty-nine from the Anglo-Saxon or Gothic, and a trace from several other sources. Shakespeare was about 200 years later than Chaucer, and he uses nearly the same proportion of words of a French and Latin parentage.

So many of his words have become obsolete that their interest and history would exhaust a treatise; but with a large number of the changed meanings we have become acquainted as a matter of convenience if not necessity. For instance, *churl*, *knave* and *villain*, in his day, conveyed no opprobrious sense. *Impertinent* merely meant *irrelevant*, which is still its legal signification, and implied neither rudeness nor intrusion. *Indifferent* meant *impartial*; *extravagant* was simply *digressive* or *vagrant*; *extra* was *wandering beyond*; *prevent* was properly to *precede* and *assist*, and *menial* might denote a gentleman and even a member of Parliament. *Address* was used in the sense of being ready to perform an act; *favor* was applied

to express outward appearance, and to *break* with one was simply to speak with another about a matter of interest. Thus in "Much Ado About Nothing" the *Prince Don Pedro* says to his favorite *Don Claudio* "If thou dost love fair Hero, cherish it, and I will *break* with her"; that is, I will open the matter to her. The same word is also used with its modern signification. *Slender* says to *Ford*, "We have appointed to dine with *Mrs. Anne* and I would not *break* with her for more money than I'll speak of." He means he would not break his engagement with her.*

Some of his constructions are now bad syntax, as when he uses *then* for *than*. Mr. Craik is of opinion that this was a part of the regular phraseology and grammar of Shakespeare's time, and he adds that there were different forms of the same word often employed interchangeably by the old writers. Occasionally we observe the introduction of a plural nominative as the subject of a verb in the singular number, especially when it is required by the rhyme. When *Macbeth* in his soliloquy before going in to murder the sleeping king says—

"Whiles I threat he lives,
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives."

The reverse of this is one of his varieties of expression, and the most illiterate murderer of the king's English could not do worse than *Brutus* when he entreats his countrymen not to depart—

"Save I alone, till Antony *have spoke*."

In this form, however, we are presented with the extraordinary force and grace in which the past tense is

* Craik's English of Shakespeare, 221.

made to express a present or future action. This is supposed to be one of the excellencies of the classical language alone, which the author just mentioned thinks has perished out of our English tongue. *Till Antony has spoken*, or *till Antony shall have spoken*, is still good English, and similarities are found to pervade our literature and daily speech; indeed, few elaborate pieces are constructed without this expedient. Besides, the subjunctive mood imports contingency, and is generally preceded by the conjunctions *if*, *that*, and others. The time implied in its tenses is indefinite and dependent; it is used to express a condition or contingency in regard to which some future occurrence is predicated. In the phrase *till Antony have spoke*, it enlarges the preterit so as to take in the future, when *Antony shall speak*; and this construction is among the recognized usages of our language and its grammar.

And, again, Shakespeare sometimes uses the infinitive mood without the preposition *to* before the verb. Mr. Craik selects the following example: *You ought not walk*. The introduction of this particle *to* as the sign of the infinitive has obtained a fixed place in our current idiom, except in certain phrases where it would be not only useless but inelegant and improper. For instance, it is omitted after the verbs *bid*, *dare*, *feel*, *hear*, *let*, *see*, *make*, *need*, and their participles. *Let me go*, not *let me to go*; *let me learn*, not *let me to learn*.

Thy Hector, wrapt in everlasting sleep,
Shall neither *hear* thee *sigh*, nor see thee *weep*.

The use of *to* in the infinitive is traced back to the earliest fragments of our literature, and ever since the 16th

century has been generally adopted as the sign of the English infinitive placed before the simple verb. Its omission in the constructions last referred to is sanctioned as an idiomatic characteristic of our language. *You ought not walk* is under the general rule not proper because the verb *walk* is not preceded by the preposition *to*, which should be inserted, thus, *You ought not to walk*. Not infrequently he uses the neuter relative *which* instead of the personal pronoun :

Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,
Which art my near'st and dearest enemy ?

But this sketch of Shakespeare cannot properly be brought to a conclusion until we have noticed his services in aid of English versification. If he did not originate a new feature in our language by giving it the sparkling fertility of blank verse, he certainly distinguished it more clearly from rhyme by bringing it nearer to common use and much more fit for action and dialogue. Marlowe, if not the first to use blank verse, was probably the first to observe the order of poetic numbers or metrical feet in its construction, and the writers on prosody assure us that this order is essential to the composition of poetry, and that without its aid blank verse would fall at once into prose. It is apparent that Shakespeare followed the example of Marlowe, for he used the same number of feet in each line, called, to distinguish it from other measures, the iambic of five feet or pentameter verse. As a most unique specimen

With regard to the double adverb, the "most unkindest," we are informed by Mr. J. H. Siddons that linguistic redundancies of this kind were in common use in the Elizabethan era, and for some time before and since *more better*, *most boldest*, were superlatives of the common tautology.

of this measure, the speech of *Mark Antony* over the dead body of *Brutus* is familiar to us all :

This was the noblest Roman of them all.
All the conspirators, save only he,
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar ;
He only, in a generous, honest thought
Of common good to all, made one of them.
His life was gentle ; and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world : “ This was a man ! ”

In English poetry a line or verse consists of a certain number of feet having generally long and short syllables. The pentameter line is the measure used by Shakespeare, and he carried it to such a degree of excellence that the greatest poems in our language have ever since been composed in the same measure, and among which we may select “ *Paradise Lost*,” and the “ *Idylls of the King*.”

Here it may be proper briefly to notice the principal metres used in English versification. These are the iambic, composed of a short and a long syllable ; the trochee, composed of a long and a short one ; the anapest, of three syllables, two short and a long one ; and the dactyl, of one long and two short syllables. It may be doubted whether Shakespeare used any but the first two, unless he occasionally placed a spondee, of two long syllables, at the end of a line in order to form a rhyming couplet, which we find here and there in all the dramas. The pentameter verse or line admits of five feet, in which any of these three can be employed without breaking the measure or interfering with the melody. Each line, according to the rules in prosody, is called a verse, and

the feet are called numbers. Hemistiches or half-verses, as well as rhyming couplets, frequently occur, and the lines run into each other when the sense requires it, especially in blank verse. Mr. Hood reckons that there are nine and twenty of these measures in Greek and Latin verse. It is also said that Horace alone used about nineteen; but the most commonly used in English are the iambic and trochee. The duration of time in which a syllable is pronounced is called its quantity, and the long one is double the length of the short one. When a syllable is sounded in a higher tone than the others it is called accent, and is placed only on the long syllables, and is also used to distinguish the important words from the low ones. There may be one accent in a line or as many as five. Suitable pauses are also to be observed, which usually coincide with the sense. There may be several pauses in the same line, according to the sense. They should, however, never divide a word nor be placed between two words intimately connected. Their proper place in the line is generally discovered by the ear. The alternate use of long and short syllables and the proper regulation of the accent and pauses constitute the foundation of melody in these splendid iambics. They offer the advantages of inversion, of flexible measures, and of vivid expression, that we admire so much in the superb idioms of antiquity. To an ear like Shakespeare's, capable of distinguishing the full variety of these graces, and calculating the endless diversity which they throw into verses without rhyme and of the same measure, he was naturally led into their use, and by a proper employment of their harmony produced the beauty and excellence of his poetry.

Blank verse is, moreover, adapted to grave subjects, and to the expression of noble sentiment and sublime language. The grave subjects of history, the action of heroes, and the fate of dynasties are suited to this mode of speech, and so far from missing rhyme in subjects of this description, we are offended to find it there. On this point I cite from an acute thinker and a profound scholar, who says :

“ In blank verse are united, in a good measure, the several properties of Latin hexameter and English rhyme ; and it possesses besides many signal properties of its own. It is not confined like hexameter by a full close at the end of every line, nor like rhyme by a full close at the end of every couplet. Its construction, which admits the lines to run into each other, gives it a still greater majesty than arises from the length of the hexameter line. By the same means it admits inversion even beyond the Latin and Greek hexameter, for these suffer some confinement by the regular closes at the end of every line. In its music it is illustrious above all. The melody of hexameter verse is circumscribed to a line, and of English rhyme to a couplet ; the melody of blank verse is under no confinement, but enjoys the utmost privilege of which melody of verse is susceptible, which is to run hand in hand with the sense. In a word, blank verse is superior to hexameter in many articles, and inferior to it in none, save in the freedom of arrangement and in the use of long words.” (*Ld. Kames's Elements*, p. 302.)

Shakespeare did not borrow from the complicated prosody of the Greeks and Romans, of which, probably, he knew but little. His richness, amplitude, and melody came by instinct and genius. Sometimes the sense of his measure is so sweet that it seems like a lovely sound from the ideal. What harmony of words and metre in the opening lines of “ Twelfth Night ” :

If music be the food of love, play on,
 Give me excess of it ; that surfeiting,
 The appetite may sicken, and so die—
 That strain again, it had a dying fall ;
 O it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
 That breaks upon a bank of violets,
 Stealing and giving odor—enough ; no more.
 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before,
 O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou !

Shakespeare's modulations are not only signs of things, but like notes of music are deliciously vague, and charm the imagination by some sudden transition from his iambic verse, as in these famous lines :

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.

(*Midsummer Night's Dream. Act V.—Scene I.*)

The more one reads these wonderful productions, he will see that their author could choose his elements ; that he had the natural art of composing them according to the principles of verse, either by knowledge or instinct. Guided by his ear rather than by reason, and more by a sense of inward melody than by a strict observance of the niceties prescribed by technical rules, he rendered a strange and grand interpretation to his creations. Without entire conformity to what is now the established rules of grammar, and assimilating many words that have failed to take root in our speech, he regulated his work with a phonetic distinctness, that remains wherever the language is spoken.

His imagination was never entrapped by the shackles of mere rhythmical measurement, nor did he permit the nature of his dramatic plots to chain him to the choice between verse and prose ; with him the two styles are not incongruous, and the severest critic of his poetic powers would blush to attribute his success to the mere echo of his verse alone. When laying aside for the moment his inimitable lyre, how glorious is his prose. As a test of his euphonious English, take the following speech of Hamlet, Act II., Scene I. :

“ I have of late (but wherefore I know not) lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises, and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory ; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust ! Man delights me not, nor woman either.”

When, therefore, the passion of a poem is of the sort that relates to elevated ideas or heroic deeds, the measured line of Shakespeare will generally be preferred. Perhaps a striking instance to the contrary are the epics of Longfellow, who has moved the only lyre that England herself compares to that of her great living poet. The length of his measure in *Evangeline* far exceeds the heroic strain of Milton, or the idyllic numbers of Tennyson, for it consists of successive combinations of eight feet, called octometre, which admits of

sixteen syllables or even more to the line, and upon a narrow page nearly one third of it is carried below the line to which it belongs. Yet notwithstanding the difficulty of his verse, such is his extraordinary sense of harmony that the ear never ceases to be pleased. His art of composing is regulated by a poetic genius that can form a melodious movement where there is no rhyme. There is such a charm in his constructions and such poetic beauty of expression that the soul is touched as well as the intellect.

The influence of Shakespeare upon our language has been constantly felt and acknowledged, and perhaps at the present moment he exercises greater authority than any living author. Our dictionaries and grammars teem with examples from his writings, and the most cautious weigher of verbal significations strengthens his opinions by referring to the same source. When a philologist wishes to illuminate the history or usage of our language, he submits to our judgment a learned piece of etymological research from his works, and our modern writers allude to his expressive passages as the most direct mode of conveying to the minds of their readers what they mean to express. When we desire to paint the temptations of glory, the allurements of ambition, the flatteries of passion, or the golden memories of love, we endeavor to clothe our sentiments in the iridescent hues of his verse.

The superb scale on which the libraries in this country are furnished with the various editions of Shakespeare and the writings connected therewith, excites our surprise and admiration. The Boston Public Library by adding to its successive collections has been

able to publish a separate catalogue of such works, which fills two hundred and twenty-seven two-column octavo pages* ; and the Shakespearean library of the late William E. Barton of New York, was described in a catalogue of seventy-two printed pages, nor is it to be regarded as the largest collection of the kind belonging to private persons in the United States.* Indeed, every library, every college and institution of learning, has its Shakespearean collections, and several are on a scale of surpassing magnificence. It is known that at the present day ancient folio editions from that of 1623, and many other works of the highest value upon the subject of Shakespeare, are to be found in Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia, and in the University of Pennsylvania. The collections of private persons are also known to be peculiarly rich ; and the researches of American scholars have rescued the ancient texts from much of their obscurity, and thrown new and additional light upon matters affecting their origin and history. Several American authors and scholars have edited the works of Shakespeare with an original revision of the text, and have thrown much light upon the ancient fragmentary histories and works of whatever importance. Verplanck, Hudson, Richard Grant White, William Cullen Bryant, and H. H. Furness have prepared and published full and learned impressions of all his writings. Indeed, his works are a favorite study in the United States, and our collections and reprints have already, probably, reached the dimensions of those in Europe. They are increasing every year, not only in the numbers but in the value of

* Shakespeare in America, printed in German by Karl Knostz.

the volumes. Those in the Boston Public Library, the Astor Library, at Cambridge, in the Pennsylvania University, and the miscellaneous stores at Washington and elsewhere, rival those in the British Museum, or in the German universities. The people of this country read and study Shakespeare. Editions of his works are prepared for our schools and academies. No author is more popular. Cheap reprints of his works abound. His lyre has become immortal in the affections of mankind. The rudest back-woodsman on the western frontier reads Shakespeare in a copy that costs not more than fifty cents. The learned professions are full of Shakespearean scholars. The Shakespeare Society of Philadelphia is composed almost entirely of lawyers. Choate knew him by heart, and Mr. Carpenter's library was one of the richest repositories of Shakespearean literature, besides containing many separate volumes of the highest value upon the subject. Men who practice at the bar quite often enliven the dull and heavy work imposed by the law, by seizing at the flowers of fancy, wit, sentiment, and wisdom scattered plentifully throughout these wonderful creations, and which seem to bloom with perennial freshness for those only who know just how much of these beauties will serve to adorn their most brilliant efforts. Language is the daily habit of the barrister; he is the public speaker *par excellence*, and here he finds simple ideas, incisive counsel, pregnant with point and thought, expressed in the depth of our pure, clear, vernacular idiom. A short phrase often contains all that unifies law, principle, and justice, and he learns lessons in pure language, taste, and strength of style better than from any other kind of *belles-lettres*

or philosophy. Indeed, if he is well grounded in the language of the mighty bard, he cannot be inaccurate in the knowledge and use of his mother tongue. It is a pure and copious fountain of energetic and powerful English, and if he has an abounding stock of words let him read Shakespeare and learn shortness and precision; if he has a slender stock of ideas let him read again and his thoughts will multiply, and perhaps his brain take fire.

In his little book about "Shakespeare in America," Mr. Karl Knostz claims that our clergy have a large share in popularizing the writings of that great author* in this country. He alludes to James M. Hoppin, professor of pastoral theology at Yale, in his work, "The Office and Work of the Christian Ministry," who speaks strongly in favor of the study of Shakespeare, maintaining that all who desire to use choice language in their sermons should first make a study of Shakespeare, even if, in so doing, they slight the Latin and Greek. The preacher, he says, should have a perfect command of his mother tongue, and that this is possible without a knowledge of the classics is shown by such men as Benjamin Franklin, Goldsmith, Hugh Miller, John Bunyan, Horace Greeley, Bayard Taylor, and others. A theologian in order to form a good style, and to learn to express himself well, should not keep to the scientific works of his own particular study, for they would be his worst guides. A clergyman should become thoroughly familiar with the best works of English literature, and should give special attention to those of

*The book of Mr. Knostz is a very able and interesting study on the branch to which it relates, and I gratefully acknowledge my obligations to him for valuable information in preparing some of these latter pages. The book is in the German language.

Shakespeare. And Dr. Emmons considered the reading of Shakespeare's works one of the best preparations for his sermons. Shakespeare was to him the champion of humanity. He shows us man as a whole, made up of good and bad, wisdom and error, strength and weakness. His works remain always fresh, and like the commandment of love are always new.

CHAPTER XI.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Bacon. His Style in English. | Obsolete Words and Orthography. |
| 2. Raleigh. Founder of English in the New World. | 5. Preachers of the 17th Century. |
| 3. Richard Hooker. Latin and Saxon Words. | 6. The Metaphysical Poets. |
| 4. Edmund Spenser. Use of | 7. The Regular Growth of English. |

WE have remarked in former chapters that poetry has always been the earliest form of composition in the history of written language.* We have also seen that works in English prose made their appearance as early as 1230, and what that appearance was may be seen in the *Ancren Riwe* (ancient rule) and in the homilies of Richard Rolle, hermit of Hampole, who wrote a century later, and whose writings are supposed to have come down to us uninjured. But to reflect the oral usage of those who spoke in such English exceeds all human ability, except it may be in some fragmentary terms that have been preserved among rural populations in their local dialects. Later came other prose writers like Mandeville, Wickliffe, More, Cranmer, and the stirring

* Voltaire, in his "Age of Louis XIV.," in mentioning the most considerable prose authors of his time, observes that none of them probably would ever have existed had they not been preceded by poetry. "Such," says he, "is the destiny of the human mind in all nations; verse is everywhere the first offspring of genius and the parent of eloquence. It is the same with the people in this respect as with particular men. Plato and Cicero began by making verses. The few good stanzas of Malherbe were known by heart at a time when we could not quote a single sublime passage in prose; and it is more than probable that without Pierre Corneille the genius of our prose writers would never have been able to display itself."

rhetoricians of the religious controversies in the early part of the 16th century. No intellect approached that of Lord Bacon. In genius and discernment his single associate was that impassioned son of light, William Shakespeare. The style of Bacon is in perfect accordance with the exalted subjects of which he treats. Placing the proper words in their proper places, he reveals a diction that far exceeds in clearness the Latin, into which some of his works were afterwards translated. He little thought that the mother tongue of his ancestors would become incalculably the richest and noblest speech for the preservation and spread of his philosophy. It is a notable circumstance that he should have turned his works, which were first written in the vernacular, into the mould of a dead language, at the very moment when he was about to crown a new era of learning with the freshest and fairest gifts of inductive reasoning. His essays are, however, preserved in their original English as are also many of his other writings. His treatise on the "Advancement of Learning" was first published in 1605, and is a noble monument of plain and intelligible English. I extract some lines from the second book, vol. VI., p. 285, as they have a bearing upon our subject :

"Concerning speech and words, the consideration of them hath produced the science of grammar; for man still striveth to reintegrate himself in those benedictions, from which by his fault he hath been deprived; and as he hath striven against the first general curse by the invention of all other arts, so hath he sought to come forth of the second general curse (which was the confusion of tongues) by the art of grammar; whereof the use in a mother tongue is small; in a foreign tongue more; but most in such foreign tongues as have ceased to be vulgar tongues, and are turned only to

learned tongues. The duty of it is of two natures; the one popular, which is for the speedy and perfect attaining languages, as well for intercourse of speech as for understanding of authors; the other philosophical, examining the power and nature of words as they are the footsteps and prints of reason; which kind of analogy between words and reason is handled *sparsim*, brokenly, though not entirely; and, therefore, I cannot report it deficient, though I think it very worthy to be reduced into a science by itself.

“Unto grammar also belongeth, as an appendix, the consideration of the accidents of words, which are measure, sound, and elevation or accent, and the sweetness and harshness of them; whence have issued some curious observations in rhetoric, but chiefly poesy, as we consider it in respect of the verse and not of the argument; wherein, though men in learned tongues do tie themselves to the ancient measures, yet in modern languages it seemeth to me as free to make new measures of verses as of dances; for a dance is a measured pace, as a verse is a measured speech. In these things the sense is better judge than the art: *Cænæ fercula nostræ mallem convivis quam placuisse cocis* (the dinner is to please the guests that eat it, not the cook that dresses it). And of the servile expressing antiquity in an unlike and an unfit subject, it is well said: *Quod tempore antiquum videtur, id incongruitate est maxime novum* (there is nothing more new than an old thing that has ceased to fit).”

In 1623, or nearly twenty years later, he had the “Advancement of Learning” translated into Latin under the name of *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, but “not without great and ample additions and enrichment thereof, especially in the second book, which handleth the partition of sciences in such sort as I hold it may serve, in lieu of the first part of the instauration, and acquit my promise in that part.” So that he took the English work designed for another purpose and cast it into Latin, to be the first part or preparation for his *Instauratio Magna*. It is generally supposed that the

translation was made by Dr. Rowley, his chaplain, Ben Jonson, his devoted friend, and Hobbes, who was at that time his disciple. The first of these, who afterwards became his biographer, has bestowed the highest praise upon the terseness and beauty of Bacon's original English, and he remarks in his "Life of Bacon": "In the composing of his books he had rather drive at a masculine and clear expression than at any fineness or affectation of phrases, and would often ask if the meaning were expressed plainly enough, as being one that accounted words to be but subservient or material to matter, and not the principal. And if his style were polite, it was because he would do no otherwise. Neither was he given to any light conceits nor descanting upon words, but did ever purposely and industriously avoid them; for he held such things to be but digressions or diversions from the scope intended, and to derogate from the weight and dignity of the style."

Jonson has described the singular charm of Bacon's colloquial and forensic habit of speaking. I give his own words, for nothing finer has ever been said of an orator: "Yet there happened in my time, one noble *Speaker*, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language (where he could spare, or passe by a jest) was nobly *ensorious*. No man ever spoke more neatly, more freshly, more weightily, or suffered less emptinesse, less idleness, in what hee utter'd. No member of his speech but consisted of its owne graces. His hearers could not cough, or looke aside from him, without losse. Hee commanded where hee spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The feare of every

man that heard him was lest hee should make an end."

A man who in the use of his native tongue could combine so many varied forms of expression with so much sensibility and fancy, and who concentrated an opulent imagery with such a terse and piquant simplicity could easily have made an immortal classic of his *Novum Organum*, that, perhaps, no other language could have surpassed. How much of the value and spirit of this work was lost in its classic counterpart may be inferred from a passage in Hallam, who informs us "that the Latin style of these writings is singularly concise, energetic, and impressive; but frequently crabbed, uncouth, and obscure, so that we read with more admiration of the sense than delight in the manner of delivering it." His mental exuberance poured forth a profusion of discourses, histories, apologies, essays, dialogues, dissertations, and original researches in the vernacular, besides carrying on a correspondence that is still read with unspeakable sympathies, for much of it was written amidst the ruins of heart and hope. But his personal fortunes have been so well delineated by my honored friend, Mr. Lovejoy, the poet, lawyer, and author, in his attractive book on Francis Bacon, that it is hardly expedient to risk a failure in retracing the ground upon which that author has bestowed so much learning, and sketched the most vivid portraiture of human greatness and frailty. It is a worthy companion piece to those of Lords Campbell and Macaulay upon the same subject.

Bacon frequently alludes to his peculiar theory concerning the existence of spirits in the tangible parts of all bodies whatsoever, more or less; and he teaches

that they are not mere virtues or energies of matter, but "a body thin and invisible, and yet having place and dimensions, and real," and that they are enclosed in these bodies as in an integument. (Rule 2, History of Life and Death.) Mr. Ellis, in his general preface to Bacon's philosophical works, mentions the fact that in his time the majority of philosophical reformers were strongly inclined to believe that all substances are animated; that a principle of life pervades the whole universe, and that each portion, besides its participation in the life of the world, has also a proper vital principle of its own. This doctrine appears to have influenced the views of Bacon, and throughout a large portion of his works his language ascribes intelligible qualities to the *spiritus* of things, such as feelings, passions, desires, and appetites. These expressions occur especially in the *Sylva Sylvarum*, or Natural History, his last work, the original of which is in Baconian English. According to this doctrine, the element of sensation is universally diffused throughout the material world. Tangible bodies have no *pleasure* in the consort of air, the *appetites* of solid bodies *resist* separation, and air *shows* no *appetite* for ascending. He speaks of the malignant spirit of opium, and of oily substances as having no *desire* to unite with air, and of the latter as not *preying* upon the former. He believes it possible to make gold, but that the spirit of the metals used in the operation should be detained, for, if allowed to escape, the metals become hard and churlish. So the working of the loadstone is by *consent* of the globe; the motion of gravity is by *consent* of dense bodies with the globe of the earth; the main float and refloat of the sea is by *consent* of the

universe as part of the diurnal motion, and stones have in them fine spirits, as appeareth by their splendor, and, therefore, they may work by *consent* upon the spirits of men to comfort and exhilarate them.

New words and names must be invented for new things, or old ones may be used when they express the meaning of something just made known. In this matter Bacon was justified by the example of many writers. But such words as *desire*, *appetite*, and *consent* would seem to imply perception as well as sensation, and are also suitable to express a consciousness of the presence of other bodies, and of the changeable state which they produce in each other, either of pleasure or pain. Now, whether this is a confusion of thought or of language, the doctrine, we are informed, was distinctly affirmed by Telsius and Campanella, who were among Bacon's contemporaries. But now except for the purposes of metaphor or hyperbole, this abuse of words has fallen into obscurity, together with the philosophy to which they belonged as a mode of explaining the phenomena of matter.

Bacon was very curious about names. In the "*Novum Organum*," for instance, he lays down his views of the *idola*, which he divides into four classes: idols of the tribe, idols of the cave, idols of the market place, and idols of the theatre. In another work, *temporis partus masculus* is a brave and noble term, meaning that induction is the masculine birth of time. The word *form* expresses the abstract qualities of matter, as *heat* or *cold*; and *spiraculum* is the higher soul of man as distinguished from the lower soul, which has fallen into a depressed or inferior grade of being in his dual nature.

However forcible these terms or phrases may have appeared to Bacon and his immediate disciples, succeeding authors have declined to adopt them, either in philosophy or literature. Indeed, few of the words or names he coined are now in common use.

In his English compositions Bacon seems to have been aware of the value of Saxon words. The Latin often furnishes him with duplicates, but he seldom substitutes them for a vigorous Saxon term. His history of King Henry VII., and his fable of the New Atlantis, are as un-Latin like as possible, and the Saxon, or monosyllabic part of the vocabulary, supports the most elevated periods, and entirely constitutes their unpretending connections. Most of the neologisms sanctioned in these volumes have become permanent forms of English. In his philosophical works, on the contrary, most all the words he invented, and many of those he borrowed, have become obsolete, or tend to obsolescence. Thus, *lapadification*, *inlupidate*, *malificiate* (borrowed from Burton), *transeur*, *transcursion*, *impinguate*, *unmaterate*, and many others, have lost their import, and their places have been assumed by modern substitutes. In the New Atlantis old forms are frequent, as *mought* for *might*, *letteth* in the sense of *hinder*, *prevented* for *anticipated*, *dorture* for *dormitory*, *lanthorn* for *lantern*, *emerands* for *emeralds*, *holpen* for *helped*, etc. But in the new edition the editor has modernized the spelling. The two works last named are both in grand old Baconian English. One was the first history, and the other the first work of the imagination, composed in copious elegant Modern English as we still employ or misemploy it.

Had Bacon, instead of deriding his native tongue, explored its capacity, penetrated its expressive power, and enriched it with the illustrations of his science, he would have doubtless been celebrated to the latest posterity as one of its greatest benefactors. But desirous of being understood by the few of his own age who could read Latin, he disdained the speech of his forefathers, and vainly attempted to soar on the wings of a classical one to the summit of science for all time. Previous to his century, the Latin language could scarcely be called quite a dead one, because it had universal possession of the learned world, which, from a great variety of circumstances, it has long since lost. There are few who read his works in their classical form. The native simplicity and genuine dignity, which are the greatest ornaments of Bacon's English compositions, leave us no room for doubt but that he might have conferred upon his native tongue the same benefit that the Italian dialect derived from the writings of Dante and Petrarch in poetry, and Boccaccio in prose, and that the English had already received from the immortal works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser.

It will not be expected that I shall enter upon an exposition of the Baconian philosophy, for it is not as a philosopher, nor a thinker, but as a writer that Bacon belongs to our subject. It is sufficient to say that before Bacon wrote the *Novum Organum* science was obscured in the subtilities of logic, and for nearly two thousand years had made but little progress. He developed the idea of induction, the true method of interpreting nature. It is the eternal philosophy of the mind and of its ideas. The philosophical Reid has said of it: "After men had

labored and searched for truth during two thousand years with the aid of syllogism, Lord Bacon proposed the method of induction as an instrument more powerful. His *Novum Organum* may be considered as a second grand era in the progress of human reason." And, although it is now denied that Bacon discovered this principle, yet all will acknowledge that he pointed out its true value, and taught its applicability to the elementary arts of life, as well as in the search for truth, either in human thought or material nature. Practice makes perfect, work and experience verify facts, and these in their turn establish principles. Franklin brought down the lightning, and thereby established its directability, and one hundred years later a galvanic current was found to transmit signals at a distance. This was not accomplished by mere logical demonstration, but by an application of recognized facts. To reason by logic to a fact or circumstance is like putting the cart before the horse. Experimental application gives a living proof that surpasses logic. Bacon postponed the speculative powers of the mind to the realities of life, and started mankind on the highway of progress. The result is practically illustrated by a great variety of beneficent examples in the improvement of society.

But to return to Bacon's language. We have seen that prose writing had been developed enough for the purpose of narrating historical events and of conducting correspondence and religious controversies. But Bacon was the first to use our Anglo-Saxon speech in expounding philosophy, and he thus paved the way for a long line of illustrious authors, to whom we are indebted for the most profound researches in every branch of intel-

lectual science, and who formed their strong and perspicuous style in our English idiom. An extract from Bacon's essay on Judicature will furnish an example in which the Saxon and Latin etymologies are blended, and we can notice that the same collocation of words prevail as is still practiced by our best writers, and that the benefits he might have conferred by developing the immeasurable resources of our language, could only have been equalled by what he effected in a philosophical direction :

“Secondly, for the advocates and counsel that plead. Patience and gravity of hearing is an essential part of justice, and an over-speaking judge is no well-tuned cymbal. It is no grace to a judge first to find that which he might have heard in due time from the bar ; or to show quickness of conceit in cutting off evidence or counsel too short, or to prevent information by questions, though pertinent. The parts of a judge in a hearing are four : to direct the evidence ; to moderate length, repetition, or impertinency of speech ; to recapitulate, select, and collate the material points of that which hath been said, and to give the rule or sentence. Whatsoever is above these is too much, and proceedeth either of glory and willingness to speak, or of impatience to hear, or of shortness of memory, or of want of a staid and equal attention. It is a strange thing to see that the boldness of advocates should prevail with judges ; whereas, they should imitate God, in whose seat they sit, who represseth the presumptuous, and giveth grace to the modest ; but it is more strange that judges should have noted favourites, which cannot but cause multiplication of fees and suspicion of by-ways. There is due from the judge to the advocate some commendation and gracing, where causes are well handled and fair pleaded, especially toward the side which obtaineth not ; for that upholds in the client the reputation of his counsel, and beats down in him the conceit of his cause. There is likewise due to the public a civil reprehension of advocates, where there appeareth cunning counsel, gross neglect, slight information, indiscreet pressing, or an overbold defense ; and let not the counsel at the bar chop with the judge,

nor wind himself into the handling of the cause anew after the judge hath declared his sentence ; but, on the other side, let not the judge meet the cause half-way, nor give occasion to the party to say his counsel or proofs were not heard."

It is estimated that there are not less than thirty-five verbs in this extract, one half of which are of Latin derivation; many of the latter, however, had passed through a Norman-French crucible. Nouns and adjectives swarm from the same source. Saxon terms outnumber all others in the composition.

The printing press had made books common in Bacon's time, and education had diffused a desire for knowledge. His essays were read and appreciated by a large class of the common people, who enjoyed the lucidity of his diction. The essays were first published in 1597, when he was in his thirty-sixth year. In them he explains the duties of life, and enforces the highest principles and emotions that are sanctioned by wisdom, virtue, and religion. His style reveals striking images and vigorous idiomatic terms upon which his genius confers the highest attributes of expression—clearness, power, and beauty. It elicits even in our day as much interest and gratification as the finest models in our literature. In his declining years he wrote: "I do now publish my essays, which of all my other works have been most current; for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms." It has been said of them that of all the productions in the English language, they contain the most matter in the fewest words; and he expressed the belief that they would 'last as long as books and letters endured.'" His philosophical works did not share the same favor.

They were composed in the speech of Rome, according to the usage of learned writers in all Europe, who wrote for each other, and who had small confidence in the progress and cultivation of their own idioms. They did not think that the dialects which they scorned had the vital independence of spoken tongues, and that while that vitality inhered they would sooner or later, when used amid powerful and civilized races, burst the fetters which condemned them to inferior position, and swell beyond the gross prejudice against their literary value. Poets, philosophers, historians, and other writers have long since composed their works in the language of polished conversation, and even those engaged in affairs of international diplomacy conduct their correspondence in their own tongue.

Among the prose writers of the 16th century, the names of Raleigh and Hooker are, perhaps, the most eminent. Raleigh had a character which appeals to the heroic vein in our nature. He lived in an age of momentous histories, and became the public idol and the queen's favorite. He was twice condemned to be executed, and wrote his celebrated history of the world in the Tower while awaiting the sentence of decapitation. He had fought by the side of Henry of Navarre, and sailed with Coligny when in command of a fleet. The discoveries of new lands, and the rage for foreign enterprises maintained public excitement and private interest in the most intrepid and contingent adventures. The genius of naval warfare selected the British seas for its empire. Cadiz was captured and pillaged, and the defeat of the Spanish Armada checked a power that was rapidly achieving universal dominion. Raleigh hated

Spain, and sought to make England mistress of the New World. He conducted three expeditions to America, in one of which he penetrated the gigantic forests of the Amazon in a vain quest for El Dorado, the land of gold. In 1584 he reached the shores of North Carolina. What a spectacle met the eyes of Raleigh! The mainland was full of mysteries and hopes. It seemed as if the sun had chosen this land where it could shine brightest. The perfume of flowers was wafted on the wooing breeze to the isles near the continent. The sailors were enchanted, and the eight hundred colonists who accompanied the fleet chose the spot for their settlement. This was the beginning of our Anglo-Saxon language and our Anglo-Saxon customs of government in that fair land. These first pioneers comprehended the most energetic, and even warlike, of the early immigrants, and, notwithstanding their misfortunes, they founded an empire of Saxon speech that extended from Virginia to Florida, and over the mountain chains and forests of the West, embracing the fairest and most fruitful regions of the world. These circumstances make it more interesting to consider Raleigh as a propagator of our language by colonization, rather than by his poetry or his prose. We have only to look at Mexico to see how different our fate and history would have been if Spain had settled that vast area with its people, its blood, and institutions. Let us remember that it was the Carolinian colonists and Sir Walter Raleigh who effected this transfer of territory and speech to our race.

Perhaps Richard Hooker had the finest literary style to be found among the prose writers of the 16th century, and his works embody nearly all the real improvements

that had been made towards its close, exhibiting a structure of language which Sir James Mackintosh pronounces not equalled by any earlier, and, he thinks, hardly surpassed by that of any later writer, and presenting us with an instance of the confluence of the two great sources of English into one onward stream of settled language; and the historian of the English people remarks that "the largeness of temper which characterized all the nobler minds of his day, the philosophic breadth which is seen so clearly in Shakespeare, as in Bacon, was united in Hooker with a grandeur and stateliness of style which raised him to the highest rank among English prose writers."

He is mentioned by endearing terms, as the venerable Hooker, the judicious Hooker, the learned Hooker, and his name is rendered familiar in the commencement eloquence of law schools by the fragment from one of his treatises, that law has its sanction in heaven and its source in the bosom of God. I present a single passage from the fifth book of his work on "Ecclesiastical Polity," where he speaks of those inspired poems, the Psalms, in the following terms:

"What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge.
* * * * Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessarily to be either known or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this

treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found. Hereof it is that we covet to make the Psalms especially familiar unto all."

It will be seen that Hooker did not hesitate, scholar as he was, between the new Latin terms and the Saxon in wielding the words of both tributaries to give force and dignity to his English. Take, for instance, the words *familiar*, *augmentation*, *magnanimity*, *moderation*, *celestial*, *fountain*, and such like in the citation, and notice how exquisitely they blend with those of Saxon origin, and form themselves into sentences quite as English, just as comprehensible, and of superior elegance to what the passage would have been if expressed only in Saxon adjuncts.

I have felt constrained to pass over one of the most illustrious names in the literature of that age—that of Edmund Spenser, whom such an impartial critic as Sir James Mackintosh has placed next to Shakespeare and Milton as a poet. His highest title to this rank is founded upon his "Faerie Queen," a poem which displays in a remarkable manner the wealth and flexibility of the English tongue. But his terms are more archaic than those of his age; and the opinion has been expressed that the mould of his language is no improvement upon that of Chaucer generations before. However that may be, many of his words had lingered in desuetude, and some had grown obsolete, if not extinct. The tentative words that he invented, and those he introduced from foreign sources, in order to help out his peculiar versification, have generally been refused admission into our vocabulary; and his changed spelling of words has not been accepted. "That Spenser is not

more read," says his biographer, Philip Masterman, "is to be ascribed in a great measure to the antiquated diction in which he writes, and to the necessity of preserving the ancient orthography—a necessity which arises from the liberties which the poet has taken in changing the spelling of words for the sake of rhyme; the consequence is, that it is impossible to modernize the *Faerie Queen* without destroying the metre." Says Dr. Sayers: "He had constructed a scheme of language for himself, in which he deserved to find no followers, and found none." These are the reasons assigned why that extraordinary production is perused by comparatively few persons. It was an era of new intelligence, in which learning was polishing the general usage of our vernacular, and transforming it into a classic model. Unfortunately Spenser appears to have ignored the new unfolding and extraordinary power of our language for improvement, and he renewed the vestiges that were hastening to oblivion. We are charmed with the stately and graceful march of his verse, and the various fall of its musical cadence upon the ear, but as he failed to contribute anything but decaying phrases to the progress of our idiom, we have not felt encouraged to consider his works in connection with our subject.

Our language enjoyed the great and inestimable benefit of many preachers, who to fervid piety joined a wide and varied scholarship, and the acquisitions of laborious study. Their fluent eloquence unfolded in a high degree the mutual influence of thought and language, and produced a sacred form in our literature that has been a constant source of purification. Such was the service rendered by Jeremy Taylor, Ralph Cudworth,

Robert South, and others. These grand preachers of the 17th century conferred upon English a salutary influence analogous to that which Luther's translation of the Bible had upon the German.

I shall avoid anything like a minute enumeration of a race of authors who flourished at the same time, and whose object was apparently to amuse their readers by striking epigrams and far-fetched conceits or hyperbole. These were called the metaphysical poets, and are thus described by their biographer, Dr. Johnson :

“The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour ; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear ; for the modulation was so imperfect that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables. * * * As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and excite the pains and pleasures of other minds ; they never inquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done ; but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature ; as beings working upon good and evil, impassive, and at leisure ; as epicurean deities, making remarks on the actions of men and the vicissitudes of life without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had never been said before.”

It is often our ignorance of a former age that obliges us to accept the conclusions of the critic. Without knowing anything beyond his suggestions, we fail to distinguish what is just from the reverse. The age in which the metaphysical poets lived had a judgment of its own. Though criticism was almost unknown, there were polished society and a clear and acute intelligence ;

Bacon and Hobbes, Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, had examined the moral and intellectual quality of human nature, and a critical knowledge of the classical languages and literature was universal among scholars. The poets just described had great success in their time. They were, as Johnson remarks, men of learning, and we may conclude that their affected style did not entirely eclipse their brilliant fancies. Waller redeems the unnatural combination of his phrases and images by a flowing smoothness of versification and an occasional felicity of diction never before attained, while Cowley has many passages of genuine inspiration and ethereal beauty. Denham scatters here and there among his augmentative lines many splendid images and prospects of human life. There is scarcely a remembrance of others, such as Luckling and Herrick, whose numbers were supposed to be the standards of perfection by their contemporaries. Dr. Johnson in his "Lives of the English Poets" has enumerated their names and works in a succession of dazzling portraits and critical observations, which have preserved them from total oblivion. However, the labor of their learning and genius has not been wholly lost. Their complicated figures and forms of expression were not without their value as a linguistic exercise. They probably versified the same image or idea over and over, until they produced something striking and pungent. They appear to have tried every turn of speech, and experimented upon the resources of our idiom to find words to express the same ideas in many different forms. This effort to ascertain in how many various ways anything could be described would serve at least to exhibit the extended range of English phrase-

ology and the variety of its vocabulary. Perhaps I may venture the remark that we can trace to their inventions the superabundant copiousness of our words, for it is doubted whether they could have found in any other living language so many different forms of expressing the same thought or image; and though nobody comprehended their contortions, it was of no consequence to them, for they did not compose to be understood, but to be admired.

The prose writers of the period also affected a quaintness of style and a collocation of language that was not particularly fortunate or graceful. Sir Thomas Browne, for instance, who was an elegant scholar and a man of genius, was not entirely free from this affectation. His works surpass those of any naturalist, philosopher, physician, or moralist after Lord Bacon's generation down to his own, and are the effusions of the highest gifts of the human intellect. Taine thinks him a kindred spirit to Shakespeare, and says that "No one has revealed in more glowing and original expressions the poetic sap which flows through all the minds of the age." Unlike Bacon, however, he composed his works in English, and he does not appear to have observed any poverty in its forms, or to have been at a loss for the most suitable terms of expression. Indeed, his most beautiful and forcible passages are precisely those which are the most endued with the English idiom. His works were collected and reprinted in 1852. His vast erudition, his fine descriptive powers, his broad and generous sympathies, his noble and magnanimous sentiments, have entitled him to the love and admiration of succeeding generations.

Notwithstanding the effort made to develop it, the growth of language is slow and gradual. Each advance of the human mind is accompanied by greater excellence in its use. We do not suspect the complexity of the causes that have transformed it into the medium of ordinary conversation, and much less to express the mental operations of the highest intellect and culture. The writer and the speaker use it without thinking of its change from rude Anglo-Saxon, or of the uninterrupted exertion of so many generations since, and the millions upon millions of men who have contributed to its development. No phenomena are more wonderful than the intensity of this effort. At first trodden under foot and despised as the jargon of slaves and serfs, it springs into life and becomes the dialect of those who attempted to crush it; and gradually rising higher and higher it is adopted as the language of the court, of the state, and finally the exclusive speech of our literature and law. There is scarcely a break in the continuity of its progress. Look at its past for a moment and see how steady has been the flow of our speech. The English of Layamon and the *Ancren Riwe* in the 13th century, is very different from that of Wickliffe and John Barbour, of Aberdeen, in the 14th; and though the historical changes in our language were probably less rapid during the exterminating Wars of the Roses, when literature and letters were submerged in the clangor of arms, yet even in the gloom and violence which then prevailed it lived in the songs of the people, and was lit up by the sacred fires of poesy that Chaucer had kindled, and by the brilliant metrical compositions and prose writings of the Scottish authors. Surrey, who

belongs to the next century, and is said by Warton to be the first poet who wrote classical English, just preceded the wonderful eruption of dramatic literature towards the close of the 16th century, when Marlowe, Green, Nash, Peele, Lodge, Kyd, and others cultivated the racy idiom of their mother tongue with a savage luxuriance of life and expression, as if their words and thoughts were the brawn and muscle of animated bodies.

It has often been remarked that there are periods in history when human genius suddenly bursts forth in some particular form, and produces works of such sublimated excellence as to command the admiration of mankind. We can recall the age of Pericles, when the fine arts attained at a single bound an extraordinary splendor; and not less memorable was the revival of painting and sculpture during the 15th century, which was the glory of modern Italy. The era of dramatic literature just mentioned was perhaps a similar instance; at least, it was the most remarkable period in the whole history of our tongue. Shakespeare and Jonson arose, the first at an infinite distance above the latter, and gave it a rapid and instantaneous completeness. There was at the same time an excessive mental activity in philosophical inquiry and general learning, as well as in works of romance and poetry. Bacon, Burton, Hobbes, and Hooker overlap upon Sidney, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, and even Milton wrote his *Mask of Comus* while Jonson was yet alive.

CHAPTER XII.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Milton's Use of the Saxon Element. | 10. Of "Paradise Lost"; His Obsolete Words and Practice of Inversion. |
| 2. Compared with Homer. | |
| 3. Improved Appearance of English in Milton's Time. | 11. Subsequent Influence Upon Our Tongue. |
| 4. His Proportion of Classical Terms. | 12. His Use of Monosyllables and Familiar Words. |
| 5. Invocation to His Mother Tongue. | 13. His Contemporaries. |
| 6. Vigorous English of His Prose. | 14. No Personal Animositities in the Grand Epic. |
| 7. His Appeal for Free Speech. | 15. His Versification; the Sound and Meaning of Words. |
| 8. The Power of English. | 16. Theories of Language. |
| 9. Language of His Minor Poems. | 17. Imitative Power of English. |
| | 18. Sound and Sense in Milton's Poetry. |

THE English of a writer who has attained such eminence as the poet Milton must be of a character to entitle it to the greatest consideration in a work upon that language. We accordingly find that in all modern works on the subject, a large and often a most wonderful degree of respect is shown for his powers as a philologist, as well as a poet. This is owing to the great

influence his writings have exercised upon subsequent authors in the use of our language, and in the expressions of refined thought. He taught his countrymen the true grandeur of the Saxon element in its construction, and exhibited its wonderful beauty and easy flow in poetry. When the blind poet of old began to sing the deeds and valor of the Greeks, and the patience and endurance of the Trojans, he had little to assist him except his imagination, and out of that realm he drew his thoughts and peopled his Iliad with the grand figures of gods and men. Not so was it with the blind poet of *Paradise Lost*. He not only brooded in darkness and silence, but the sombre hue of his fancy furnished no image but that of the world of spirits, and their conflicts with the Creator himself. The difference in the subjects of the two poets is great, indeed. The one deals with the activities of human life, its passions and ambitions, while the other delineates the spiritual forces of the unseen world in their rebellion against the Author of their existence. The one is full of the efforts of man, when he is excited by the strongest impulses to the accomplishment of what he considers the great aims of life; the other is a grand description of what a fallen race of angels sought to do in a world invisible and inaccessible to human observation, and where all the powers of darkness were still more remote from human view by the shadowy realms they occupied. There is, indeed, a similarity in the greatness of the design, for they both portray the highest and noblest exercise of the intellect when called upon to think and act, but the prodigious superiority of the one over the other is just here, in the grouping of men and their actions, and in the grouping

of angels and the heavenly hosts in their magnificent combats. There is little more to expect in the delineations of Homer than the perfect manner in which they are made; there is nothing in Milton's great poem to expect but a failure, unless it is executed by a genius almost as superhuman as the scenes it describes. But neither have failed, and both are perfect in their way. This comparison is not made upon any idea of the modern conception of poetry, for it would be unjust to both to measure them by such a standard. The ancient poem deals with things entirely out of the range of ordinary experience, and its heroes are demi-gods, and its spiritual creations are the mythological deities of the Greeks, while the poem of Milton deals with things entirely of another world, and such as never were nor can be experienced on earth. This is a species of poetry that has not been practiced during the present century. The poet now turns his attention to the real things of life, making the passions of men, their conduct, their sorrows, their joys, and their morals the subjects of his verse. It is the poetry of life and the living manners of the age that tune the modern lyre. We perceive in this how great has been the change, and how erroneous it would be to judge the older poets with those of the present school.

In Milton's day the English language had received many improvements. The form of its idiom was very different from that of the Brut of Layamon, or the Ormulum of a later period. Many works had appeared, and many had disappeared, but the language itself had remained and had taken on a new and improved appearance. Its moods and tenses had been reduced to order,

its nouns and pronouns had been simplified into one or two declensions, its conjunctions, adverbs, prepositions, and articles had assumed their present form and use, and the grammar had been studied, and the rules of syntax applied as we still apply them. Indeed, the language had acquired its literary symmetry and was written so that we can now read it without the aid of a glossary. But the great influence of Milton upon it was to show its wonderful power to express the highest flights of the most towering imagination. In this respect he is unrivalled, and no one else has ever dared his lofty strain. The grandest epic is written in good old English-Saxon, and the proportion of foreign or classical terms is not greater than in Shakespeare. It is a singular circumstance that one of his earliest poems begins with a beautiful invocation to his mother tongue. He was then in his nineteenth year. It was a college exercise, partly in Latin and partly in English. The latter part begins:

Hail, native language, that my sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavouring tongue to speak,
And madest imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask
That now I use thee for my latter task;
I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out.

In his "Literary Musings" he informs us that he was prompted to study and labor in order that he might perhaps leave something so written to after-times as as they should not willingly let it die; and that he applied himself to that resolution so as to fix all the industry and art he could unite to the adorning of

his native tongue, not to make verbal curiosities the end, but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among his own citizens in the mother dialect. Never was an original design more brilliantly fulfilled. The name of Milton is not a theme of importance to any one unless he is somewhat versed in his writings. His prose is almost as wonderful as his poetry, and it would be difficult to understand what he had done for his native tongue without considering his various writings upon the controversies of his age. Here we will find the most vigorous and the plainest English, mingled with many Latin neologisms it is true, but still the native element predominates and gives force to the whole. Take, for instance, his noble defense of the freedom of speech. There is scarcely anything finer in the language. I shall premise by saying that in 1644 Milton published his noble remonstrance on the censorship of the press. Under Charles I. no book could be printed in England except it was submitted to the Star Chamber and received its sanction. The Long Parliament abolished the Star Chamber, and for the moment the press of England appeared to be free. But the same Parliament which had denied the divine right of kings denied in the same breath the divine right of free speech, and passed an ordinance on the subject as tyrannical as any of those of Elizabeth, for the suppression of individual thought and utterance. I give a single passage from Milton's protest to illustrate the quality of his language in prose, the magnanimity of his sentiments, the perspicuity of his expression, and the undaunted courage with which he remonstrated in the sacred name of justice against a Parliament composed of

his friends. He was as independent as he was superior to the sectaries and partizans, who thought that freedom of speech and inquiry were only for those of their own opinion :

“Why should we affect a rigour contrary to the manner of God and of nature by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are, to the trial of virtue and the exercise of truth. And now the time in special is, by privilege, to write and speak what may help to the further discussing of matters in agitation. The Temple of Janus with his two controversial faces might now not unsignificantly be set open. And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; whoever knew Truth put to the worst in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clear knowledge to be sent down among us would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva, fram’d and fabric’t already to our hands. Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose if it comes not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whereas we are exhorted by the wise men to use diligence, to seek for wisdom as for hidd’n treasures, early and late, that another order shall enjoin us to know nothing but by statute. When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn from his reasons as it were a battle, rang’d, scatter’d, and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth. For who knows not that Truth is strong next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, no stratagems, no licensings to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power.”

Here we observe the full strength of the language in an effort to secure its own freedom. The passage contains 320 words; 280 of these are pure English-Saxon, and the balance come from other sources. But the arrangement of the sentences derives force and clearness from the juxtaposition of the words, and the sense goes along with them just as we arrange our sentences today.

It is perhaps needless to describe the activity of his pen during the fierce struggles of the Commonwealth. The distraction in England gave rise to the most violent political and theological controversies. Milton's great sources of information, and the readiness and force of his writing, were conspicuous. He invigorated all the great questions of the conflict with his sound sense, the graces of his style, and the singular felicity of his language; sometimes sarcastic even to bitterness, occasionally coarse in language, always acute, often moderate, and the constant friend of toleration in matters of opinion or faith, his genius might be compared to a furnace, into which every metal enters and comes out a medallion or a statue. He was the pen of the republic, as Cromwell was the sword of the civil war, and the light that streamed from the one was as brilliant and perhaps as useful as that which flashed from the other. Milton sided with the Puritans, because they admitted the Bible as the rule of faith, but he was greater than the Puritans, because he allowed each man to decide for himself, and had no intermediary between the individual and God. The divine nature of the Jewish Theosophy fired his imagination. "The Scripture," I extract from his Reason of Church Government,

“also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon, consisting of two persons and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies. * * * * But these frequent songs throughout the laws and prophets, in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made to appear, over all the kinds of lyric poesy, to be incomparable.”

And God himself has bestowed gifts

“to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God’s almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ.”

It will be felt that his style has all the intensity of the Saxon genius and language, with both force and harmony. Mr. Mills quotes the remarks of a critic in the *Edinburgh Review*, which read as follows:

“It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should, in our time, be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff, with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of *Paradise Lost* has he ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture.”

But these reflections upon his prose writings have, perhaps, led us away from his poetry, upon which his fame now mostly reposes. His early poems were written

while he was at college, or soon afterwards. It is uncertain how many of them were the work of his later years, but all must agree that they evince a very high order of poetic genius. There is nothing in the language finer than some portions of the *Comus*. Take, for instance, the following idyll, descriptive of the home of *Psyche* :

There eternal summer dwells,
 And west winds, with musky wing,
 About the cedar'd alleys fling
 Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
 Iris there with humid bow
 Waters the odorous banks, that blow
 Flowers of more mingled hue
 Than her purpled scarf can show ;
 And drenches with Elysian dew
 (List, mortals, if your ears be true)
 Beds of hyacinth and roses,
 Where young Adonis oft reposes,
 Waxing well of his deep wound.

If these lines are tinged with the soft cadence of Rome, they clearly derive their beauty, vivacity, and force from the harmonious arrangement of Saxon etymons.

We cannot pass from these earlier poems without calling attention to some of the most striking of them. The "Hymn of Christ's Nativity" ought to be read in order to appreciate its beauties. I can cite but one stanza from its solemn echo :

No war or battle's sound
 Was heard the world around,
 The idle spear and shield were high up-hung,

The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spoke not to the armed throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they knew their sovereign Lord was by.

In his life of Milton, Mr. Bridges remarks that "the climax of his (Milton's) rhymes in this hymn is perfect, and that there is no other lyrical stanza in our language so various, so musical, and so grand. The Alexandrian close is like the swelling of the wind when the blast rises to its height."

In the "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," in "Samson Agonistes" and "Lycides," are some beautiful cantos that have a place among his pieces for the picturesqueness of their style. The language in all these poems is so purely English that no one can mistake its origin, or fail to observe the uncommon gracefulness of the composition. Writers of the highest authority (notwithstanding Dr. Johnson) acknowledge that if Milton had written nothing more than his so-called minor pieces, their splendor would entitle him to the reputation of a great poet.

His "Paradise Lost" has been the subject of perhaps the finest and most complete critical review in our language, that of Joseph Addison. He takes a general view of this great epic under four heads, the fable, the characters, the sentiments, and the language, and in each of these particulars he proves that the poem is beautiful by being sublime, by being soft, and by being natural. He recommends it for its passion, for its moral, for its sentiments, and for its expression. He shows how the poet's genius shines by happy invention,

by exquisite judgment, and by judicious imitation, and he adds: "I have endeavored to particularize those innumerable kinds of beauty which may be met with in the works of this great author," and he pronounces in another connection that "Paradise Lost is more useful and instructive than any poem in any other language. Indeed, the best judges hold it to be the greatest poem in the English language, and others have not hesitated to express the opinion that it is the most sublime epic poem in any language. So far as I am able to judge, I join in both of these views."

In regard to the language used by Milton, which is the matter that lies nearest to our subject, Mr. Addison acknowledges that by the choice of the noblest words and phrases which our tongue would afford him, he has carried our language to a greater height than any of the English poets have ever done before or after him, and thus made the sublimity of his style equal to that of his sentiments. It is sustained and lofty throughout as became his mighty theme. It is doubtful if any one has reached the lustre of his diction, even after the vast interval through which our literature has passed since Addison wrote his criticism.

Some criticism has been made upon Milton's assimilation of words from a foreign source, and of his use of technical terms. But in a composite language like our own is it not allowable and expedient to enrich it with verbal accretions, and has not this been one of the principal means sought to supply the resources of our vocabulary? Milton's original expressions enter into the idiom with such felicity that not more than 200 words in his poetical works have become obsolete, and

he employs ten per cent. less in a hundred words from a Latin origin, than Dr. Johnson, who criticises him. In the use of nouns and adjectives he sometimes uses one for the other, and occasionally he adopts a vowel for a consonant to increase the softness and melody of the passage; he transforms the characteristic endings of the parts of speech to accommodate the measure, and in repeated instances he has removed a syllable from the body of a vocable to overcome the disadvantage of its accent. He has also resorted to the expedient of inversion to secure elevation and majesty of expression. It was supposed to be the faculty of inversion that constituted the beauty of the learned languages. It was thought until Milton's time that the flexible cases and verbal inflexions, which could be applied in Latin and Greek, afforded the poets and orators of the dead tongues many advantages denied to our own. But it is now admitted by the highest authority that the loftiness of Milton's style arises greatly from inversion. Of this observation the opening lines of *Paradise Lost* are a sublime example:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse.

He relied not only upon the native richness of his mother tongue, but upon all the aids to thought, energy, and beauty he could draw from his vast learning, and his knowledge of other dialects; and whatever

accession of new terms he introduced, he conformed them with such singular grace, as if the admixture were a specimen of the language itself. One instance more will suffice :

O thou, that, with surprising glory crown'd,
 Lookst from thy sole dominion like the God
 Of this new world ; at whose sight all the stars
 Hide their diminished heads ; *to thee I call,*
 But with no friendly voice.

“ The *broad circumference* of Satan’s mighty shield,”
 “ he bows his *grey dissimulation*,” and “ the swan rows
 her state with *oary feet* ” are examples of his picturesque
 and composite forms.

This brings us to a consideration of Milton’s influence upon the subsequent progress of our tongue. He was, undoubtedly, the first to show its vigor in the region of pure imagination. No other writer since his day has ever attempted a similar theme, and no one has ever attempted to imitate him in his exalted symbolism, or in his grand conceptions of the world where the immortal spirit dwells and fulfills its destiny. There is a grandeur in his ideas, a sublimity in his thoughts that rises out of the boundless resources of his mind and overpower us by their splendor. But of all the many passages in his *Paradise Lost* that show how well he could use his native tongue, none will probably surpass his description of the conflict of the powers of darkness with the angelic hosts, in the sixth book. The combat is between demons and angels, between heaven and hell. It is not for earthly empire, but for the “ Mount of God ” itself.

The action is full of astounding incidents. The impious foes hold almost an equal fight the first day, and the second they bring new engines of war to their assistance. The angels taken by surprise threw away their arms, and fled with lightning speed to the hills, and

From their foundations loosening to and fro,
They plucked the seated hills with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops,
Uplifting bore them in their hands.

The Messiah himself appeared upon the third day,

Gloomy as night under his burning wheels,
The steadfast empyrean shook throughout
All but the throne itself of God.

and drove the hosts of evil beyond the crystal walls of heaven, headlong to the bottomless pit. These wonders are all related in plain English, and the whole description, as far as the words are concerned, can be read by the most illiterate person who can read at all, and every one of them would seem familiar to him. It is this adherence to his own idiom that has made Milton an English classic, and one of the great landmarks of our language. We do not recall a writer of his century whose diction depends so much upon particles and monosyllabic words. Take, for instance, the description of *Adam* and *Eve* in the Garden of Eden; especially where the latter speaks of her love, and that all the flowers, and birds, and harmonies of Paradise would be as nothing without the presence of *Adam*.

When Milton speaks of the fallen angels he does not underestimate the great powers that they still possess,

nor does he assign to them qualities that are merely human, but he describes them as the sons of God, with grand endowments and the highest type of genius. He never lowers the character of the arch enemy to that of a mere devil, such as you find in the "Inferno," or in the "Faust" of Goethe. They are the gods of evil, warring on heaven and assailing its crystal walls. "The *Satan* of Milton," says a French author, "more fiery than the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, is an incomparable creation." He had no superior among the angels of God in intellectual beauty and spiritual magnificence. He loses his hope of glory, love, and worship; and crushed, blighted, and ruined is hurled from the heavenly seats to the regions of darkness and despair. He becomes the leader of them all in evil; the superior to them all in wickedness and daring. In the passages where he harangues his fellow sufferers, during the consultations described in Book III., there occur perhaps the most defiant denunciations ever uttered by man or devil. He advises that all the powers and dominions of hell should unite in one more effort to regain their lost place in heaven. Here the language is appropriate to the design in view. That fair world is lost; there is no hope of ever entering it again unless they take it by force, and reign once more in the blessed beams of its light. The addresses flame with intense passion, befitting the stupendous plan of the arch conspirator. It may require great care to parse much of the language, owing to the Latin mode of transposition, but the words are nearly all in the vernacular; there is probably not more than one in ten that is not pure English. And in the description of the visit

that *Satan* makes to the newborn planet to spy out the abode of the first happy pair of human beings, there are scarcely any words that are not familiar to every school-boy. We might cite hundreds of passages marked by the same preference for English etymons, but these will suffice to show how this great poet enriched and developed his mother tongue, by enshrining in its forms the thoughts and beauties of his mighty verse.

We have already seen that at the time Milton wrote the language was pretty well formed. It had, in fact, passed out of the transitional period, and grown into a methodical form of speech. The early writers had performed much labor in bringing it into this condition, and had been the pioneers in its first steps towards development. There had been many crude grammatical forms in the structure of Early English, and many dialects were familiar in one portion of the kingdom that were unknown in others. But at the time Milton appeared the language had been used for several centuries, and in the long period of its probation had acquired a regularity that admitted of a uniform style for written composition. It was this uniform speech that Milton employed and carried to the highest perfection. No previous author had used it with much success in blank verse, except Shakespeare; but it was left to Milton to carry that form of versification to such lofty heights that it has never since been surpassed, if equaled. The most finished productions that have since appeared seem tame when compared with his *Paradise Lost*, in which we find the noblest sentiments clothed in the grandest, and, at the same time, the simplest words that could be selected from our vocabulary. This has undoubtedly

had a great influence on the language itself, teaching us that it can be used for the highest purposes of poetry, and with the greatest effect, when its simplest terms are employed. The influence of a great author upon his native tongue has often been the subject of remark, but perhaps it applies more strongly to Milton than to any other author, Shakespeare and Chaucer alone excepted. It is necessary to understand how far a man can go in order to test his endurance, and when we see him traveling far beyond his fellows we admit that his strength and endurance are superior to the other competitors in the race. So it is with the writers just mentioned; they out-travel all their contemporaries, and come down to us as fresh and strong as when they commenced their journey to future generations. So it was with Milton. His contemporaries were mostly men of the new order of things that Charles II. introduced upon his restoration to the throne. Then commenced a kind of literature that is almost forgotten. It was, in fact, not fit to live, and therefore died a natural death at its birth. It was a worse type than any that preceded it, or followed it. It was without faith in God or man, and ministered to the baser passions, and only excited the feelings in order to blunt them. There was no man among the writers of that dreadful period of whom it could be said, as of Milton, that he was blind to the ordinary objects of vision, but his inward sight was clear. The world of sense was to him only an object of the past, but the unseen was the real world where his vision could see and read the great and eternal realities of the spirit. The advantage that Milton possessed over his contemporaries lay in the quickened powers of his soul, which soared above the

things of earth that he could not see, into the things of the imagination, where his vision reveled in the splendors of the unseen glories of its creative power. When we consider that Milton was cut off, as it were, from books, and almost from friends, it seems strange that he could have meditated for months and years, and carried the plan of his great poem in his head, and wrought out its details and episodes without any one to cheer the gloom and solitude of his home. All was dark to his opaque eyeballs, but within all was the sunshine of a bright and glorious universe of light. He had no thought of solving the mysteries of the world around him; he had withdrawn from it and raised his thoughts to another world, where he could imagine the grand secrets of the future, and describe the manner of the soul in its eternal home. There was no room for earthly prejudice in the plan. The great Florentine made his purgatory and his lower realms of darkness and despair the abode of his enemies, and of those whom he hated. The blind old man of England had lived an active life among men, and had given and received many heavy and rancorous blows, but he punished no one, spoke evil of no one, and imagined no one of all the enemies he had in the abodes of despair. Even the friends he loved, and the great men with whom he had been associated, were not elevated to the regions of the blessed. It was a great poem, created for wider purposes than to punish or reward mere individuals. When we consider the part he bore during the reign of the Commonwealth, it is surprising that he did not take occasion in his poems to portray some of the bitterness among his foes in the colors of his satire and

revenge. Dante had used his genius before him for that purpose, and Dryden afterwards failed not to impale forever those whom he hated. But Milton, more magnanimous than either, never interrupted the story of his poem, nor belittled the grandeur of his theme by personal allusions. We cannot but admire the total want of personal matter in the poetry of his last years. There are only the touching lines upon the subject of his loss of sight, and in those he expresses no sour or irreverent spirit. The submissiveness of a child could not be more pathetically expressed. And when we also consider the troublous times in which he wrote his last pieces, we are astonished at the calmness of the man as much as at the fervor of the poet. We are not at liberty to suppose that Milton witnessed the downfall of his friends, the triumph of their foes, and the re-establishment of the old dynasty without emotion; but it is a matter of surprise that he could view all these events without making them figure in his work. We must remember that the soul of the poet was absorbed in his theme, and that he could not turn from that for the temporary affairs of a day.

The versification of Milton is that species called blank verse. This metre had been employed by some of the early dramatists, especially by Shakespeare, who brought it to a great degree of perfection. No one after him had used it with much success. Beaumont and Fletcher, in some of their pieces, had tried to introduce it again upon the stage, but the effort was abandoned after one or two experiments. It was reserved for Milton to carry this metre to such grand and harmonious melody as to give it a place far above all the rhyming poetry that up to

that time had been composed. As has been explained already, it dispenses with rhyme in the ordinary sense of that term, and produces harmony by the regular arrangement of poetic feet in the line, by a pause in the proper place, and by accenting the syllable in the word so as to make it long or short. Of course, much depends upon the ear, and when it is practiced in the art the harmony is as fine and agreeable as in rhyme. The advantage of blank verse lies in its free and easy flow, in its preserving the sense from line to line, and in allowing the poet to carry out his image without compelling him to sacrifice it to mere words because they sound alike.

CHAPTER XIII.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED TO THE BEGINNING OF THE XIX. CENTURY.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Authors of the Restoration. | 3. Dryden—Poet, Critic, and |
| 2. Butler, Author of "Hudibras." | Dramatist. |

THE authors belonging to the reign of Charles II. differ widely from those of the Protectorate. The most nefarious abominations quickened in the light of day, and the participators faced the publicity of their shame without a blush. The rapid and violent moral revolution that followed the Restoration was as marked as that in national or political matters. We sometimes read but never study the literature of that dissolute era. The supply of words had become inexhaustible, and the writers on all occasions availed themselves without stint of these treasures, and even compounded them together in a manner seldom attempted before or since by those wishing to be understood in pure English. In less than ten years after the Restoration, profligacy of conduct and conversation was the only test of royalty, the sole qualification for rank and office. A deep and general taint had infected the morals of the most influential classes, and spread itself through every branch of letters and literature. Poetry inflamed the passions; even divinity itself inculcating an abject reverence for the court, gave additional effect to its licentious example. In the fashionable

libertinism of the day, there is a hard, cold ferocity, an impudence and lowness that can be paralleled among the heroes and heroines only of its filthy literature. The drama was debased to the lowest dregs of indecency, profanity, and lewdness. "The productions at that time represented in the theatre were such monsters of extravagance and folly, so utterly devoid of all reason, or even common sense, that they would be the disgrace of English literature, had not the nation made atonement for its former admiration of them by the total oblivion to which they are now condemned." (Hume, vol. II.) Indeed, what less could be expected when the favorite duchess of the king stamped about Whitehall, cursing and swearing, to the amazement of the ministers who sat at the council board, and when the names of Rochester and Wycherly were the exponents of vice and libertinism. On the other hand, Waller, Cowley, and Sir William Temple, royalists to the backbone, stood firm for the dignity and decency of letters, and kept themselves "unpolluted by that inundation of vice which overwhelmed the nation." Nor is the period without considerable claims to our respect for discoveries in science of the highest importance. Robert Hooke and Christian Huygens invented the pendulum, and Robert Boyle perfected the air-pump, while Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest of philosophers, began to unfold his theory of the universe; nor should we omit to mention with reverence an orator of that generation like Jeremy Taylor, or writers like Sir Thomas Browne and Sir William Temple.

Since that time a myriad host of writers, speakers, and poets have appeared, with whose works we are

quite familiar, and their beautiful and harmonious language is now a common bond between the different branches of the race who speak it over the whole globe. From this period we also date the works of our great satirists. Samuel Butler was the first in order of time. Satire was not a new feature in English language. Nearly one hundred years before, the popular indignation against the vices and crimes of the priesthood, and of the court of Scotland, found expression in the satirical writings of her poets, especially in those of William Dunbar and Sir David Lindsay, which are full of genuine wit and broad humor. In 1597 Joseph Hall published his "Three Last Bookes of Byting Satyrs," that had the honor of being burned by the order of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who at that time was one of the censors of the press. We read of the fixed reputation and widespread popularity of the poems of the two poets in the Northern kingdom, whilst little remains of the "Byting Satyrs" except their name. But the echo of Butler's great poem has come down to the present day. He produced three cantos of *Hudibras* in 1663; the second part in 1664; the third part fourteen years later, and died in 1680, leaving the poem unfinished. If we may judge of this author by his famous satire, he must have been a man of bitter and malignant temper. I digress for a moment to consider the spirit of the poem before coming to its language. The religious austerity of the Puritans, their vernacular and manners, were thought by Butler, who was an intense royalist, to be fair game; and for sixteen years he burlesqued them with unmeasured industry. During all this time he shut his eyes to the abominable corruptions of the times, the social insincer-

ities and personal vices of the great mass of the royalists. "Horace laughs at the follies of his age; Juvenal glows with indignation at the vices of his own." Not so with the author of *Hudibras*. He passes over the proper subject of his invective, and ridicules the men whose terrible deeds led the charge at Marston Moor, and whose success and genius raised England to the highest pitch of power and prosperity. He sneers at the peculiar phrases and epithets they had created, but which his friends had never sneered at, when rung athwart the battle-field. Their religious zeal is hypocrisy; the anomalies of their character are grotesque mummeries, and Cromwell's Ironsides, whose backs their enemies had never looked upon, are painted as poltroons, speaking through their noses, and whose most heroic deeds consisted in cutting down May-poles and stopping bear dances. After the Restoration, the Puritans were persecuted with cruelties too horrible to relate. The Act of Oblivion was a delusion. The court favorites and royalists would gather around a gibbet for amusement, to see a Roundhead cut down alive, disemboweled, his entrails cast into the fire, and his beating heart torn out and shown to the people, while they filled the air with coarse and brutal jests. We may be sure that these sanguinary profligates would be delighted with a poem so full of rancor and gross caricature of those they treated with such horrors. I transcribe a few lines from Taine (*Book III.*, 465), speaking of *Hudibras*:

"Every thing turns on the trivial; if a beauty presents itself, it is spoiled by burlesque. To read these long details of the kitchen, those boisterous and crude jokes, one might fancy oneself in the company of a common buffoon in the market; it is the talk of

quacks on the bridges, adapting their imagination and language to the manners of the beer shop and the hovel. There is filth to be met with there; in short, the rabble will laugh when the mountebank alludes to the disgusting acts of private life. Such is the grotesque stuff in which the courtiers of the Restoration delighted; their spite and their coarseness took a pleasure in the spectacle of these bawling puppets; even now, after two centuries, we hear the ribald laughter of this audience of lackeys."

Occasionally we read a strain of his muse and feel its wit and truth. The writers of the day, for instance, affected a smartness of conceit, a kind of quibbling with words. In describing Hudibras's rhetoric, he hits at this style in these lines:

"But when he pleas'd to show't his speech
In loftiness of sound was rich;
A Babylonish dialect,
Which learned pedants much affect;
It was a party colour'd dress
Of patch'd and piebald language;
Twas English cut on Greek and Latin,
Like fustian heretofore on satin;
It had an odd promiscuous tone,
As if h' had talk'd three parts in one;
Which made some think, when he did gabble,
Th' had heard three labourers of Babel,
Or Cerberus himself pronounce
A leash of languages at once."

Here and there are scattered among many mean and paltry verses some that have become proverbial in the language, as when he describes the style of Hudibras's logic:

He could distinguish and divide
A hair 'twixt south and southwest side.

* * * * *

He'd run in debt by disputation,
And pay with ratiocination.

* * * * *

And little quarrels often prove
To be but new recruits of love.

The satire is written in a short metre that is classed as the iambic, or four feet tetrameter. Dean Swift resorted to it when his style was humorous or indecent (the latter most usual). Scott has admirably adapted it to many of his poetical works, and it is the measure in which Byron's "Giaour" and "Parisina" are written. But in Hudibras it has acquired favor through its jingle more than its style. He twists and deforms words to suit the metre with more than a poet's license; even when this expedient is not required by the necessity of the rhyme. Here are examples: *i' th'* for *in the*, *o' th'* for *of the*, *'ad* for *had*, *'em* for *them*. He suppresses a letter in the body of a word, like *per'lous* for *perilous*, *b'ing* for *being*. A letter is made to stand for a word, as *'s* for *his*, and *y'* for *you*. He docks the past participle by placing an inverted comma for the *e*, or ends it with a *t*, as in *scorn'd*, *ransackt*. Indeed, he appears to take a malicious delight in defacing as well as defiling our speech. Many of his low words and vulgarisms cannot decently be repeated. His useless contractions find no excuse in the imitations of older styles, and the only apology for his ribaldry is the example of some of the more dissolute poets of his own time. Dr. Johnson, with all his prejudice against the sectaries, thinks that while you may find wit and humor in Hudibras, yet it is not to be reckoned a poem. (Boswell, 2d Vol., 306.) The conception of the plot is not original, as it is said

to be founded on "Don Quixote." Its popularity was owing to the hatred of the royalists, and the gross burlesque derived its effect from the all powerful impression that the Puritans had stamped upon men's minds. They had been hated and feared, and these feelings were but little softened in the days of Swift and Johnson. The royalists knew them well in both peace and war, and the satire, coming so soon after their downfall, seemed like a fitting song to the orgies of their adversaries. All orders of society read it. It was vastly popular with every rank, class, and condition of men who wished to stand well with the new powers. The poets praised it—they were a venal tribe; and the whole flight of panderers and buffoons pounced upon it and carried it to where the king was amusing himself with the favorite duchess. Buckingham read it aloud, and the paltry parasites set up a chorus of applause. The ministers employed their time at the council-board in repeating its jests for the king's amusement, and began to pommel each other and to tear off each other's lace collars and periwigs to increase the sport. This extraordinary admiration has resounded to our own day, and has helped to float it on the wave of popular favor. It is admired by prescription.

Perhaps it was not until Macaulay, and Greene, and Taine began to write history that the benefits effected by the rebellion of 1640 were clearly understood and acknowledged. These benefits were pointed out in the form and centre of present civil systems; and now we recognize what the men in that historical upheaval first taught, the indispensable privileges of the people, the remedies for their violated rights, and the exercise of

irresponsible power forever denied. The unreasoning spirit of conservatism and its faithful companion, obstinacy, which descended from the cavaliers, have been shaken to their depths, and the author who spent his life and abilities in deriding and scoffing at the virtues, the achievements, and the fanaticism, if you will, of the Reformers, has ceased to exert an influence degrading to our poetry and debasing to our language.

Another writer belongs to this class, whose extraordinary mastery of the difficult art of satire has placed him, in the estimation of good judges, at its head. Dryden has left us an incomparable model in this kind of composition in his "Absalom and Achitophel." Dr. Johnson, in his "Lives of the English Poets," says of it:

"If it be considered as a poem, political or controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigor of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition."

The poem was applied to the political factions of that day, and to the corrupt men who led and controlled them. Among these, conspicuous by his abilities and wickedness, was Lord Shaftesbury. From a learned and upright Chancellor when he sat on the wool-sack, he betrayed every other trust, and tried to succeed through crime and conspiracy where his ambition and genius had failed. Dryden's delineation of this character, under the fictitious name of *Achitophel*, is perhaps unmatched to this day as an example of personal satire in

this or any other language. Notwithstanding the space it occupies, I give the passage in full, as an exhibition of our mother tongue at the close of the 17th century :

CHARACTER OF SHAFTESBURY.

Of these the false Achitophel was first ;
 A name to all succeeding ages curst ;
 For close designs and crooked counsels fit ;
 Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit ;
 Restless, unfix'd in principles and place ;
 In power unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace :
 A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
 And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
 A daring pilot in extremity ;
 Pleas'd with the danger, when the waves went high,
 He sought the storms ; but, for a calm unfit,
 Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
 Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
 And thin partitions do their bounds divide ;
 Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
 Refuse his age the needful hours of rest ?
 Punish a body which he could not please ;
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease ?
 And all to leave what with his toil he won,
 To that unfeather'd two-legged thing, a son ;
 Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
 And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
 In friendship false, implacable in hate ;
 Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the state :
 To compass this, the triple bond he broke,
 The pillars of the public safety shook,
 And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke :
 Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
 Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.
 So easy still it proves in factious times,
 With public zeal to cancel private crimes ;

How safe is treason, and how sacred ill,
Where none can sin against the people's will !
Where crowds can wink, and no offense be known,
Since in another's guilt they find their own !
Yet fame deserv'd no enemy can grudge ;
The statesman we abhor, yet praise the judge.
In Israel's court ne'er sat an Abethdin
With more discerning eyes, or hands more clean,
Unbrib'd, unsought, the wretched to redress,
Swift of dispatch, and easy of access.
Oh ! had he been content to serve the crown
With virtues only proper for the gown ;
Or had the rankness of the soil been freed
From cockle that oppressed the noble seed ;
David for him his tuneful harp had strung,
And heaven had wanted one immortal song.
But wild ambition loves to slide, not stand ;
And fortune's ice prefers to virtue's land,
Achitophel, grown weary to possess
A lawful fame and lazy happiness,
Disdain'd the golden fruit to gather free,
And lent the crowd his arm to shake the tree.

This satire is still read, not only for the subjects it treats, but also for the beauty of its language. Its style is in perfect accordance with Dean Swift's definition of proper words in their proper places ; and it is a rare example of the grace and spontaneity with which the mind projects its thoughts into speech. The richness of our language had become such as to furnish the poet with the required forms of expression all ready to enter into his verse, and to take their places as if these had been marked out in advance. It is interesting to note how at that time the ingredients of the Anglo-Saxon, Norman-French, and Latin neologisms had developed and coalesced into a veritable progressive and

powerful English. In proof of this remark I subjoin a list of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives that occur in the first seventeen lines of the above extract, that are not modified in their form or signification at the present day, with perhaps a single exception. The nouns from the Anglo-Saxon are as follows :

<i>Name</i>	from	<i>Nama</i>
<i>Wit</i>	"	<i>Witt</i>
<i>Soul</i>	"	<i>Sawel, O. E. Saul</i>
<i>Way</i>	"	<i>Weg</i>
<i>Body</i>	"	<i>Bodig</i>
<i>Clay</i>	"	<i>Clæy</i>
<i>Waves</i>	"	<i>Weag</i>
<i>Sands</i>	"	<i>Sand</i>
<i>Storm</i>	"	<i>Storm</i>
<i>Madness</i>	"	<i>Gemæd</i>
<i>Wealth</i>	"	<i>O. English</i>
<i>Rest</i>	"	<i>Rest</i>

Nouns from the French and Latin :

		FRENCH.	LATIN.
<i>Ages</i>	from	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ætas</i>
<i>Designs</i>	"		<i>Signum</i>
<i>Counsels</i>	"	<i>Conseil</i>	
<i>Principles</i>	"	<i>Principe</i>	<i>Principium</i>
<i>Place</i>	"	<i>Place</i>	
<i>Power</i>	"	<i>Pouvoir</i>	<i>Posse</i>
<i>Disgrace</i>	"	<i>Disgrace</i>	
<i>Decay</i>	"	<i>Dechoir</i>	<i>De and Cedere</i>
<i>Tenement</i>	"	<i>Tenement</i>	<i>Tenementum</i>
<i>Pilot</i>	"	<i>Pilote</i>	
<i>Extremity</i>	"	<i>Extremite</i>	<i>Extremitas</i>
<i>Danger</i>	"	<i>Danger</i>	<i>Dangereum</i>
<i>Calm</i>	"	<i>Calme</i>	
<i>Partitions</i>	"	<i>Partition</i>	<i>Partitia</i>

<i>Honour</i>	“	<i>Honneur</i>	
<i>Hours</i>	“	<i>Heure</i>	<i>Hora</i>

The verbs from the Anglo-Saxon are as follows :

<i>Was</i>	from	<i>Weis</i>
<i>Went</i>	“	<i>Wend</i>
<i>Sought</i>	“	<i>Secarn</i>
<i>Steer</i>	“	<i>Steoran</i>
<i>Boast</i>	“	<i>Bost, O. E.</i>
<i>Blest</i>	“	<i>Bletsian</i>

Verbs from French and Latin :

		FRENCH.	LATIN.
<i>Fretted</i>	from	<i>Frettes</i>	<i>Frictum</i>
<i>Informed</i>	“	<i>Informer</i>	<i>Informere</i>
<i>Allied</i>	“	<i>Allier</i>	<i>Alligare</i>
<i>Divide</i>	“		<i>Dividere</i>
<i>Refuse</i>	“	<i>Refuser</i>	<i>Recuso</i>

Adjectives from French and Latin :

		FRENCH.	LATIN.
<i>False</i>	from		<i>Falsus</i>
<i>Succeeding</i>	“		<i>Succedere</i>
<i>Close</i>	“	<i>Clos</i>	<i>Claudere</i>
<i>Sagacious</i>	“		<i>Sagacitas</i>
<i>Turbulent</i>	“	<i>Turbulent</i>	<i>Turbulentus</i>
<i>Impatient</i>	“	<i>Impatience</i>	<i>Impatiens</i>
<i>Pigmy</i>	“	<i>Pygmee</i>	<i>Pygmæus</i>

Adjectives from Anglo-Saxon :

<i>Crooked</i>	from	<i>Krok</i>
<i>Bold</i>	“	<i>Bald</i>
<i>Restless</i>	“	<i>Rest</i>
<i>Fiercely</i>	“	<i>Fyr</i>
<i>Daring</i>	“	<i>Dearr</i>
<i>Needless</i>	“	<i>Nead</i>
<i>Thin</i>	“	<i>Thynne.</i>

It will be observed that of the words selected from these few lines, twenty-eight are traced back to French and Latin, the latter being derived principally through a French medium, and twenty-six are of Saxon origin. The articles, pronouns, adverbs, and particles, and auxiliaries are all Saxon, and swell that element to more than triple the proportions of French and Latin combined. This ratio of lingual ingredients probably pervades the entire poem, and as Dryden is acknowledged by Dr. Johnson, Brougham, and Macaulay to be the most prolific and finest writer of prose, poetry, and criticism in the last quarter of the 17th century, we may reasonably conclude that his words are derived in somewhat the same unequal portions from the same sources. They had all, however, received their Anglican stamp in their present form, and are all equally good English. Their etymology is no longer obscure, nor their syntax irregular. The Latin and Saxon roots are described in modern dictionaries, and Dryden's rich and varied vocabulary has the rare faculty of taking on his idea, and of responding to the least inspiration of his thought. We know very well that the author of the ode in honor of St. Cecilia's Day did not himself strike out all at once this idiom so beautiful and so marvelously appropriate to his purpose. The evolution of intelligence had gradually formed terms to express its thought, until at the time he began to write, English words belonged to all orders of ideas and circumstances, of feelings, images, and passions. We find that when he is most severe, there is an ease and simplicity in his use of words that make his invective forever memorable, as when he describes the Duke of Buckingham

under the name of *Zimri* :

A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome ;
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong ;
Was everything by startes, and nothing long ;
But, in the course of one revolving moon
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon ;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

When James II. came to the crown Dryden turned Roman Catholic, and was continued poet-laureate, but upon the abdication of James and the succession of William III., he was deprived of this post, and also of his office as historiographer to the king, and Thomas Shadwell was appointed in his place. This was viewed by Dryden as a disgrace, and kindled in his soul an implacable resentment against Shadwell, that he poured forth in a poem aimed directly at him, called "*MacFlecknoe*." It is the most bitter satire that any age or language has produced, and shows that our vocabulary has no equal for keen and remorseless invective. Probably no memory would have preserved the name of Shadwell, or of Elkanah Little, had they not become immortal as the victims of Dryden's sarcastic verse. However, his enemies took their revenge, for Dryden affirms more libels had been written on him than on any man alive.

In 1679 Dryden published his translation of Virgil. To Gavin Douglas, however, belongs the honor of being the author of the first metrical translation of a classical writer. His *Æneid* was completed in 1514, and his success was so marked that he had many imi-

tators; and a few years later Surrey, whom Warton considers "the first English classical poet," and many think the first improver of our language after Chaucer, translated the third and fourth books of Virgil. This work seems to have been suggested by the prior version of Douglas, as he frequently copies from it. The critics think that Dryden sometimes mistakes this author's meaning, and exceeds the license of a translator in order to shine as a poet; and his most brilliant passages, though not inferior to those of Virgil, are thought to be too free and paraphrastical. All admit that his version abounds in beauties, that the language is transparent, soft, flowing, and melodious, and that he has found it sufficient to imitate the delicacies and refinements of the ancients. Many passages show Dryden's felicity in word painting, especially those detailing the destruction of the palace of Priam, the death of the king, the complaint of Queen Dido, and the arrival of Æneas in the Elysian Fields. Dryden had an admirable discretion in choosing his words, and in the manner of grouping them into beautiful combinations, and they have often the advantage of not only pleasing the ear but of responding to some secret need of the soul. The words come as if they had been presented to the mind. Take, for instance, the following passage from the ode at Alexander's Feast. This has been pronounced the finest lyric composition in our language, and perhaps it stands on a par with Cowper's, Hill's, and Milton's "Ode on the Nativity." Timotheus, by the subtle affinities of music, had inflamed the soul of "Philip's warlike son" with the promptings of ambition and love, and then with altered tone he sang :

Softly sweet in Lydian measures,
 Soon he sooth'd his soul to pleasures.
 War, he sung, is toil and trouble,
 Honor but an empty bubble,
 Never ending, still beginning,
 Fighting still, and still destroying;
 If the world be worth thy winning,
 Think, O think it worth enjoying.

Churchill says of Dryden :

“Numbers ennobling numbers in their course
 In varied sweetness flow, in varied force,
 The pow'rs of genius and of judgment join
 And the whole art of poetry is thine.”

Previous to Dryden's time there had been different views as to the proper measure for heroic verse in English. From Marlowe down, however, it had been pretty well settled. We know that hexameter was preferred by the Greek and Roman poets, and is that in which the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* are composed. The ancients had, besides this, a great variety of rhymes, each composed of a certain number of feet, so that the poet could select the one best suited to his theme, as dactyls and spondees for the grave subject of an epic, and the anapests for a rapid or lively movement. The hexameter contains the greatest number of syllables that can be pronounced without taking breath; beyond that limit the voice commences to fail, and perhaps this may be one of the reasons why it was preferred to other lines containing a greater number of syllables. The epic form of verse, with us, is composed of five iambic feet, commonly called the pentameter measure, and consequently contains ten syllables. This is the line of Shakespeare

and Milton, and is the one adopted by Dryden. It is adapted to rhyme, and is equally suitable for blank verse. His satire, unlike that of *Hudibras*, requires dignity and polish, and in this respect it still allures us by the phases of its idiom and the beauty of its style. The poet is hopelessly coarse and vulgar when he becomes personal, unless he selects his words with taste and composes with art. Perhaps no one ever equaled Dryden in combining and choosing the power of terms to contribute to the force and pungency of his lines. There is the swell of beautiful adjectives, and the presence of nouns the most expressive, to represent in abstract terms the follies and vices of his contemporaries; and thanks to his iambics, poets like Pope and Thomson, of the 18th century, and like Scott, Byron, Longfellow, and Tennyson, of the 19th, have experienced no embarrassment in pouring the burning metal of their inspirations into the mould that had been prepared two hundred years before.

A word should now be spoken of his works in prose, for they form an important part of his literary history. He was the earliest writer upon the principles that produce good writing in English, and he has consequently been styled the father of modern criticism. It may appear strange that no one had previously explained the precepts of English composition, since great authors like Bacon and Milton had written apparently in accordance with established rules. They relied, however, upon the inborn power of genius, that taught them the fitness of things, and they soared as naturally as the eagle in its lofty flight. We witness the same marvellous condition of letters in Greece, where there were

great authors before Aristotle wrote his treatise on Poetry and Rhetoric, and also in Rome before Cicero produced his work on the Orator. These celebrated men were the earliest critics in their respective countries, and yet Plato, the prince of philosophers, preceded the first, and Ennius, the father of Roman song, the latter.

In his prose essay on Dramatic Poetry, Dryden refers to the fact that there was not a living master to instruct him; that even Shakespeare, who created the stage, had written happily rather than knowingly or justly, and that the art was born in him. This essay was first published in 1668, and contains his famous argument in favor of rhyme for the stage. In form it is a dialogue, professing to imitate conversation, and the particular subject is the art of dramatic poesy. There are four different characters in the piece, who, however, were real persons, Dryden being one of them under the assumed name of *Narcisus*. Although he is the main person, the others are not mere dummies, brought in to set off the principal performer, as we so often witness in the theatrical company of a star actor; but each makes his observations, as if he himself were the principal character, and this is sustained with such integrity to the whole that *Crites* (Sir Robert Howard), who contends for blank verse, seems to have the best of the argument. He puts the sentiments appropriate to each speaker in his mouth, and at last gives his own in favor of his doctrine upon the subject of rhyme, and his objections to the methods of the ancients. This part of the dialogue assumes the air of a dissertation, but is enlivened with sufficient imagination admirably calcu-

lated to keep up our interest, and lacks nothing but metre to make it poetry. The reasons in favor of blank verse are expressed by *Crites*, who is supposed to be Sir Robert Howard, a poet, and brother-in-law of Dryden. In 1668 Sir Robert brought out his tragedy of the "Duke of Serma, or the Great Favorite," and prefixed to it some remarks against rhyming in the English drama. In expressing his thoughts he not only differed from the renowned author of the essay on Dramatic Poetry, but his observations must have been distinguished by a tone peculiarly offensive to Dryden, for in a short time he came out with his celebrated "Defense" of his former essay, of which Sir Walter Scott says: "It is worthy of preservation, as it would be difficult to point out deeper contempt and irony couched under language as temperate, cold, and outwardly respectful."

In the dedication of his play of the "Rival Ladies," in 1663, Dryden earnestly defends rhyme as the proper measure for the poetical drama, and to sustain his position by authority, he refers to the tragedy of "Queen Gorboduc," which belonged to the time of Elizabeth, as being in rhyme. The reference is unfortunate, for that play is in blank verse, except the choruses, which are in stanzas. He is equally unfortunate in saying that Shakespeare *invented* blank verse to shun the pains of continual rhyming, for Marlowe used blank verse before the days of Shakespeare. No poet of that day exceeded Dryden in the multiplicity of his plays, and this is to be ascribed to his necessities. He had to write them or starve; but he debased his genius to the vitiated taste of the scum and dregs of society. His poverty was aggravated by the reproach of abusing

the greatness of his talents for the parasites of wickedness and folly. With the exception of but a few scenes, his dramas are disfigured by *double-entendre* and display the most disgusting scenes taken from private life. They were all in rhyme until a late period of his life, when he gave it up; but his most ingenious prose writings were devoted to its defense. It must be agreed that rhyme is now a matter of little consequence in the views that prevail, for it has long ceased to deserve the name of controversy. As early as 1676, or about ten years after his *Defense*, he confesses that he has grown weary of his *long-loved mistress*, rhyme. In the Prologue of his play of "Aureng Zebe," which he brought out that year, he bids her farewell in the following lines, and he used blank verse always in his subsequent dramas :

"And to confess the truth, though out of time
Grows weary of his long-loved mistress, rhyme,
Passions too fierce to be in fetters bound,
And Nature flies him, like enchanted ground.
What verse can do, he has performed in this,
Which he presumes the most correct of his;
But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name.
Awed when he hears his god-like Romans rage,
He in a just despair would quit the stage,
And to an age less polished, more unskilled
Does with disdain the foremost honours yield."

Of Dryden's vigorous English style, there are instances on almost every page of his prose, of which I shall assign only a few examples; not that they are the best that might be chosen to illustrate his rare skill, but they are those that most coincide with the subject of

this book. The quotations are from Sir Walter Scott's collection of his entire works. In speaking of one of his patrons who had written a poem, he says :

"You equal Donne in the variety, multiplicity, and choice of thoughts ; you excel him in the manner and the words. He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satire but in his amorous verses, where nature should reign ; and perplexes the mind of the fair sex with nice speculations. In this Mr. Cowley has copied him to a fault." (VOL. II., p. 8.)

In regard to Spenser and Milton, he has the following :

"And though, perhaps, the love of their masters may have transported both too far in the frequent use of them, yet in my opinion obsolete words may thus be laudably revived, when either they are more sounding, or more significant than those in practice, and when their security is taken away by joining other words to them which clear the sense, according to the rule of Horace for the admission of new words, but in both cases a moderation is to be observed in the use of them, for unnecessary coinage, as well as unnecessary revival, runs into affectation, a fault to be avoided on either hand."

Although he often expresses admiration for Spenser and Milton, he has a grudging and sparing way when referring to their transcendent works. Here is something in the same spirit :

"That the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practiced by our fathers, even Crites does not much oppose it ; and every one was willing to acknowledge how much our poetry is improved by the happiness of some writers yet living, who first taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression, and to make our rhyme as properly a part of the sense, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it." (VOL. XV., p. 301.)

And again :

“Wit is best conveyed to us in the most easy language, and is most to be admired when a great thought comes dressed in words so commonly received, that it is understood by the meanest apprehension, as the best meat is the most easily digested.” (Id. 320.)

In speaking of Cleveland :

“We cannot read a verse of his without making a face at it, as if every word were a pill to swallow. There is this difference betwixt his satire and Doctor Donne’s, that the one gives us deep thoughts in common language, though rough cadence, the other gives us common thoughts in abstruse words.”

Of Beaumont and Fletcher :

“I believe the English language in them arrived at the highest perfection; what words have since been taken in are rather superfluous than ornamental.” (Id. 352.)

And of Jonson :

“If there is any fault in his language, it was that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his comedies; perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our terms, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them, wherein though he learnedly followed their language, he did not enough comply with the idiom of ours.” (Id. 353.)

* * * * *

“Our language is noble, full, and significant, and I know not why he who is master of it may not clothe ordinary things in it as decently as in the Latin, if he use the same diligence in his choice of words. If Seneca could make an ordinary theme sound well in Latin by the choice of words, the same with the like care might be performed in English.” (Id. 272.)

His ideas on the subject of translating are expressed in his Essay on Satire, prefixed to the translation of “Juvenal and Persius,” and I believe his theory has been generally adopted by others. He says :

“The common way we have taken is not a literal translation, but a kind of paraphrase or some what which is yet more loose be-

twixt a paraphrase and imitation. It was not possible for us, or any men, to have made it pleasant any other way, not in rendering the exact sense of these authors almost line for line. A noble author should not be pursued too close by a translator. We lose his spirit when we think to take his body; the grosser part remains with us, but the soul has flown away in some noble expression, or some delicate turn of words or thought. We make our author appear in poetic dress. We have actually made him appear more sounding and more elegant than he was before in English, and have endeavored to make him speak that kind of English which he would have spoken had he lived in England, and had written in this age."

These examples will, perhaps, suffice to afford us the means of forming an estimate of his art in composition. He found our language "noble, full, and significant," but it had not yet attained the easy grace and flow of familiar intercourse in its written structure. This refinement, which is the charm of conversation, we first find in his verse, as well as in his prose. His idiom in the familiar use of words was destined to be carried to the greatest perfection by Addison and Swift in the succeeding century, and his adaptations of poetical terms of almost every kind that were purely English were pretty much the same as those that adorned the smooth and labored lines of Pope, and Cowper, and Goldsmith. Indeed, it would be difficult to overestimate the benefits he has conferred upon our language. I close my remarks on Dryden by giving an extract from Dr. Beattie's opinion of his genius:

"There is no modern writer whose style is more distinguishable. Energy and ease are its chief characters. The former is owing to a happy choice of expressions, equally emphatical and plain; the latter to a laudable partiality in favor of the idioms and radical words of the English tongue, the native richness and pecu-

liar genius whereof are perhaps more apparent in him than in any other of our poets. In Dryden's more correct pieces we meet with no affectation of words of Greek or Latin etymology, no cumbersome pomp of epithets, no drawling circumlocutions, no idle glare of images, no blundering round about a meaning; his English is pure and simple, nervous and clear, to a degree which Pope has never exceeded and not always equaled."

CHAPTER XIV.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Court Writers of the Restoration. | 5. John Locke. |
| 2. Richard Baxter. | 6. Jeremy Taylor. |
| 3. Izaak Walton. | 7. Bishop Hall, and Other Divines of the 17th Century. |
| 4. John Bunyan. | |

These Writers Connected by Critical and Biographical Remarks.

THE 17th century has transmitted to us voluminous legacies of books and manuscripts far beyond those of any former period. A very complete knowledge of the resources of our language was developed, but, unfortunately, the poets and most of the writers who succeeded to the Restoration threw off even appearance of respect for virtue or purity, and drew their scenes and characters from the province of vice and debauchery. "They understood their own character better than it was understood by their successors. They called themselves wits instead of poets, and wits they were; the difference is not in degree, but in kind. They succeeded in what they aimed at—in satire and in panegyric, in ridiculing an enemy and in flattering a friend, in turning a song and in complimenting a lady, in pointing an epigram and in telling a lewd tale; in these branches of literary art—

the Birmingham trade of verse—they have rarely been surpassed.”

In the structure of their language, however, there are few archaic forms of speech. Latin had ceased to be the language of literature, and the writers cultivated an observance of the niceties of expression and a smoothness of style that is usually ascribed by the historians of English literature to the influence of French models, that followed Charles II. on his return from that country, where he had passed a great portion of his exile. Unfortunately, good English and elegant phraseology were esteemed of more importance than a compliance with the claims of public decency, or a conformity with the moral law. Even Dryden was not free from reproach. His comedies are horribly full of *double-entendre*, and in his declining years he regretted his fault.

Perhaps it is hardly necessary to say that a book or a literature without virtue and without morals is not more likely to gain the lasting esteem of posterity than is a vicious and depraved individual; and in each case a similarity of future forgetfulness and disfavor hangs over them at every step of human progress. The corrupt manners of the times, or the accidental circumstances of the man or the subject, may bias and cloud the discrimination of contemporaries, but these seldom, if ever, extend their influence beyond the present. The living principle which the Supreme Benevolence has formed us all to feel in our moral nature, will sooner or later consign works of this kind to the oblivion they deserve. Such has been the fate of the class of writings alluded to, and the ostentatious display of depravity which is so thickly sown in the midst of their

graces has been richly harvested in the almost total want of favor with which they are now regarded. They have lost their place in our literature.

Though the great body of those who wrote pamphlets, plays, and satires were contaminated with the licentiousness of the age, there were many and grand exceptions. Temple, Browne, and Dryden have already been mentioned. Newton placed astronomy upon an unerring basis, and unfolded its laws by the adoption of a new calculus to aid the theorems of the ancient geometers. The learning of ancient authors, restored by the scholars of the previous generation, was made applicable to English forms as far as practicable, and much refinement was thereby added to the native idiom; the printing press, colleague of speech, presented its wings to intelligence, and books began to enter the family circle and cheer the domestic hearth, and from this epoch also sprang a poem that is the glory of the English tongue. There was no end of books and pamphlets on current politics, on practical religion, and controversial theology. It is said that Richard Baxter wrote more than one hundred and twenty volumes, and more than two hundred different works, which, for variety of matter, would make a library of theology and politics. His political works, with those of Milton, were burned in the court of the schools of the University of Oxford on the very day that the noble and generous Lord William Russell was put to death. Many others wrote volumes of history, poetry, sermons, and miscellaneous subjects. Perhaps nothing has ever been superior to the "Complete Angler, or the Recreations of a Contemplative Man," in the clearness and sim-

plicity of its style, and in a sincere love of all that was good and honorable. It is still a very popular book, as if it described the life and employed the language of our own day. It is the image of a pure nature, that believes in virtue, in morality, and religion. Everybody knows that Izaak Walton is the author of this charming, amusing, and unsullied work. Among his friends were the best men of the century, many of whose biographies he composed as a work of love. Indeed, his name is a household word for everything that is sweet and pure in human character. He is distinguished for a style of composition without affectation or the artifice of authorship. A simple-hearted writer of plain English, he says of himself: "I would rather prove myself a gentleman by being learned and humble, valiant and inoffensive, virtuous and communicable, than by fond ostentation of riches, or wanting these virtues myself, boasting these were in my ancestors; and yet I grant that where a noble and ancient descent and such virtues meet in any man, it is double dignification of the person."

In the *British Angler* (1740), by J. Williamson, he is spoken of thus:

"His style flows on like a gentle brook, itself a parable of the quiet spirit it teaches." "His own simple, homebred English style." "His language has blemishes no doubt, but what would be awkwardness in others has in him a graceful quaintness, nor could a fault be amended without marring a beauty. * * This art (English writing) seems to have arrived at its highest perfection at once, and to have been the same in Mr. Walton as that of poetry in Homer. The improvements that are made by later writers are so few, and for the most part so trivial, that I could not but wonder at seeing so much done to so little purpose."

Some of his words are new, as *dignification*, *mixtion*, which are becoming obsolete, and *willinger*, which did not stay. He says, "Good company in a journey makes the way *to seem* the shorter." In his day the preposition *to* was always inserted after the verb *make* to govern the infinitive. Now it is omitted. He gives a curious bit of etymology of the word *lie*. The words of Sir Henry Walton, that an ambassador was an honest man sent to *lie* abroad for the good of his country, got him into some trouble. Walton was his biographer, and explains that the word *lie* at that time had a double meaning, signifying *to sojourn* or *travel*, as well as to utter a falsehood. With us it means a willful violation of truth. Walton died when upwards of ninety years old, and no one except Byron has ever spoken unkindly of him. (Notes to 13th Canto of Don Juan.)

Another writer of the most original genius belongs to the same period, John Bunyan. His history is perhaps the most extraordinary in our literature. Mackintosh places him at the head of unlettered men of genius.* The son of a tinker, he followed the same calling in early life. He had been a Baptist preacher for five years, when, within a few months after the Restoration, he was thrown into Bedford jail for conducting the religious exercises of his sect, which had been prohibited by the cruel act of Parliament against conventicles. Here, we are informed, he remained for twelve years confined in a close room, and here, also, with little or no advantage from education or reading, and upon such scraps of paper as came to his hand, he commenced to write a work that stands without a rival in its popularity and in

* Mackintosh; *Revolution*, p. 283.

the sympathies of the great majority of those who speak the same idiom. He describes the origin and progress of the work in some amusing verses prefixed to his *Holy War*, which I transcribe as an example of his poetry, which is more like prose :

“ Some say the Pilgrim’s Progress is not mine,
 Insinuating as if I would shine
 In name and fame by the worth of another,
 Like some made rich by robbing their brother ;
 Or, that so fond I am of being sire,
 I’ll father bastards ; or, if need require,
 I’ll tell a lie in print to get applause.
 I scorn it ; John such dirt-heap never was
 Since God converted him. Let this suffice
 To show why I my Pilgrim patronize.
 It came from mine own heart, so to my head,
 And thence into my fingers trickled ;
 Then to my pen from whence immediately
 On paper I did dribble it daintily.
 Manner and matter, too, was all mine own,
 Nor was it unto any mortal known
 Till I had done it, nor did any then,
 By books, by wits, by tongues, or hand, or pen,
 Add five words to it, or write half a line
 Thereof ; the whole and every whit is mine.”

The religious ardor of the 17th century presents many irrational affectations, which we would now attribute to the most audacious quackery, or at best to the lunacy of a believer. Large numbers of those who pretended to attach themselves to the non-conformists were justly odious and ridiculous, from their Oriental type of phraseology, which was supposed to diffuse the odors of sanctity upon the saints who adopted it. Not a few of them were mainly anxious to fix the precise moment of

their conversion, or new birth, for whoever could not asseverate the very instant of his regeneration by the town clock was considered as having a weak and uncertain visitation of the spirit. On one occasion a soldier entered a place of worship with a lighted lantern in one hand and a pocket Bible in the other, and requested the preacher to be silent and listen to a message he brought from Heaven. The preacher informed him that he was just delivering such a message himself. Upon being put out of the church, he declared to a crowd collected outside that he had witnessed a vision in which he had received a command from God, to deliver His will to them, which they were to receive under pain of eternal damnation; and he then proceeded to deliver a new revelation, much of which would now pass for blasphemy. Not only were time-honored games and festivals relinquished, but minced pies and plum puddings were reputed profane and abominable viands on Christmas.*

It was under such influences that Bunyan passed his boyhood. His impressible nature was not only touched by sensible images, but was also deeply moved by psychological environments. A frenzy of spiritual anarchy infected his whole consciousness. He was assailed with the terrors of the lost. He heard voices in the air. The world of spirits was a reality to him. Demons jeered at his anguish, and almost compelled him to utter profane and blasphemous language in his devotions. Sitting in the open street, he exclaimed, "I am gone and lost." When playing on the village green, a voice tells him that unless he abandons the sinful sport his soul is

* Reference to foot-note Hudibras. Con. 1, p. 22.

doomed to hell. He gives that up, and also surrenders the ringing of the church bells, under the persuasion that it is a sinful indulgence, and afterwards when present in the same place to hear the favorite sound of the bell, he hastens away under the dreadful terror that it will fall upon him and crush him for his sins. He contemplated the supernatural omens with a credulity as abject as the fetish worship of an aboriginal. He prays for a ray of heavenly light upon the dark valley into which he is plunged; but the evil ones are about him with the license of pandemonium. Despair, anguish, self-depression, and the fear of a dreadful hereafter, combined, transform this imaginative and sensitive soul into a whirlwind of fiery passions. His groans for mercy, the baleful visions and mutterings that disturb his midnight dreams and trouble his morning slumbers, his deathlike paleness, his haggard features during the period of his conversion, impart to this portion of his life and sufferings almost the majesty of martyrdom. He surrenders his personal associates and boon companions, and abandons his dancing and athletic sports upon the village green out of an equivocal respect for the grim-visaged austerity of the day, and considers himself little more godly than *Apollyon*, or any other of the incarnations of evil that he has symbolized in his masterpiece. No doubt they were all the reflections of his own experience.

“One morning,” he writes, “as I lay in my bed, I was most fiercely assaulted with this temptation to sell and part with Christ, the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, ‘Sell him, sell him, sell him!’ as fast as a man could speak, against which also in my mind, as at other times, I answered, ‘No, no, not for thou-

sands, thousands, thousands,' at least twenty times together; but at last after much striving, I felt this thought pass in my mind, 'Let him go if he will,' and I thought also that I felt my heart freely consent thereto. Oh, the diligence of Satan! Oh, the desperateness of man's heart!"

But he often experienced an opposite state of mind when he realized and believed in the immediate presence of the Lord.

"At another time as I sat by the fire in my house, and musing on my wretchedness, the Lord made that also a precious word unto me, 'He hath made peace by the blood of his cross.' I thought that the glory of these words was then so weighty on me, that I was both once and twice ready to swoon as I sat; yet not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace."

The power of belief acting on a sensitive nature and a vivid imagination, gives a name and local habitation to the terrors and illusions of the mind, and the soul of the visionary sinks to the gloomy horror of eternal damnation, or is stimulated by the exquisite delights of God's free grace and pardon.

Essentially Bunyan was subject to the worldly interests that naturally claimed his daily attention. He had married a young woman whose whole property consisted of two books, "The Practice of Piety," and the "Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven." He and his wife read them together, she doing most of the reading as he had almost forgotten the way—he had looked at no books for years. The latter of these proved the king's highway to Bunyan, for it put him to thinking. But he was a father as well as a husband, and the care for the support of his family reacted upon his tender and ardent nature, and he filled up the time of his imprisonment by

making tagged laces to help them, besides preaching to his fellow prisoners, and beginning the work by which he has immortalized himself.

Apart from these influences, his sincerity, his profound reverence for the word of God, and the progress of divine grace in his soul, at length brought relief, and the dominion of the elect was no longer a boundary horizon beyond which he could not aspire to see. From that time the peace of God marked the staid decorum with which he observed religious rites, and practiced the precepts which he inculcated upon others.

That such a man has left us a model in the English tongue throws a warm interest upon his biography and its incidents. The idiom in which the obscure Anabaptist composed his *Pilgrim's Progress* has to this day lost little of its originality. Its success cannot be attributed to a flow of classic polysyllables, for he knew nothing of them, nor yet to the plodding English of the Roundheads, who were so fond of sesquipedalian appellations borrowed from the Old Testament, like Habakkuk, Boanerges, and Zerobabel. And yet his language is singularly idiomatic and full of meaning to his co-religionists. It is free from those inaccuracies and grammatical solecisms which we might expect in the writings of a person who was so little indebted to an early education, and who was deprived of access to books during the period of composition. He writes plain, straightforward English, and in a spirit of vigor and manliness that can never be attained by mere artifice, while the many proofs he gives of thoughts and genuine feelings, after the paroxysms of his conversion had passed away, indicate a truly devotional spirit, and

a degree of invention and spontaneous ability for composition that is very wonderful.

It is estimated that ninety-three per cent. of his vocabulary is of Saxon derivation. Indeed, it may be said that Bunyan though not a linguist has concentrated the native idiom of our tongue, and will probably continue to be the prime standard of its simple force and beauty. No rival genius has been equal to imitate or degrade his affluent and picturesque diction. His figurative types and imagery had a singular charm for the Puritan imagination. The story is the history of man in his progress to redemption under the form of allegory, and in their moments of relaxation, in the midst of the affections of home and fireside, its scriptural metaphors and quaint and sober witticisms were read for edification and amusement. The persecution exhibited in the treatment of *Christian* and *Faithful* in the City of Vanity Fair was a farcical travesty of the judicial proceedings against the dissenters in England. *Judge Hate Good* presides at the trial of the Pilgrims and instructs the jury in the law, that "There was an act made in the days of Pharaoh the Great, that lest those of a contrary religion should multiply and grow too strong for him, their males should be thrown into the river. There was an act also made in the days of Nebuchadnezzar the Great, that whoever would not fall down and worship his golden image, should be thrown into the fiery furnace. There was also an act made in the days of Darius, that whoso for some time called upon any God but him should be cast into the lions' den. Now the substance of these laws this rebel has broken, not only in thought (which is not to be borne),

but also in word and deed, which must, therefore, needs be intolerable." *Faithful* is condemned and executed, but *Christian* escapes. What a tincture of irony in the names of the witnesses, *Envy*, *Superstition*, and *Pick-think*! And what a comical masque in those of the jurors: *Mr. Blindman*, the foreman, sees clearly that the man is a heretic; *Mr. No Good* wants the fellow away from the earth; *Mr. Malice* hates the very looks of him; *Mr. Love-lust* could not endure him; *Mr. Live-loose* is of the same opinion; "hang him," says *Mr. Heady*; "he's a sorry scrub," says *Mr. High-mind*; "my heart rises against him," says *Mr. Enmity*; "he is a rogue," says *Mr. Liar*; "hanging is too good for him," says *Mr. Cruelty*; "let us dispatch him out of the way," says *Mr. Hate-light*. "Then," said *Mr. Implacable*, "might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore, let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death." Any one can imagine the grim satisfaction of the sectaries at seeing their oppressors held up under such odious appellations to the scorn and ridicule of mankind in a work so universally popular.

I shall give but one more example of his style, in which Bunyan expresses some admirable ethical views upon the subject of profession and practice. It is a dialogue between *Faithful* and *Christian*:

Faithful—"Well, I see that *saying* and *doing* are two things, and hereafter I shall better observe this distinction."

Christian—"They are two things, indeed, and are as diverse as are the soul and body; for as the body without the soul is but a dead carcass, so saying, if it be alone, is but a dead carcass also. The soul of religion is the practical part; pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the

world.' This *Talkative* is not aware of; he thinks that hearing and saying will make a good Christian; and thus he deceiveth his own soul. Hearing is but as the sowing of the seed; talking is not sufficient to prove that fruit is, indeed, in the heart and life; and let us assure ourselves that at the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits; it will not be said then, 'Did you believe?' but 'Were you doers, or talkers only?' and accordingly shall they be judged."

This fine piece of homage to the beauty of good works is as different from the loose morality of contemporary writers as it is from their affected wit, their puerile rhetoric, and the false taste that debased both prose and poetry; and it is singular that, after Dryden, the despised Anabaptist should be among the first to bring back the purity and simplicity of our tongue. Whether he describes the dangers and conflicts of his Pilgrim, or the fundamental truths of religion, or the glories of the Celestial City, there is something peculiar in the simple and racy English with which he captivates the mind of the reader, who feels that he is learning something, and never grows tired of the charm. The dissenters read the book because it was an image of their own experience. It was the offspring of the overwhelming religious idea that then absorbed innumerable multitudes of the English people. Like good *Christian*, they had fled from the City of Destruction, had been swallowed up in the Slough of Despond, had climbed the Hill of Difficulty, and descended into the Valley of Humiliation, and passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, where the Mouth of Hell was close to the road. The coincidences, the presages, the visions, the dreadful apparitions, and the fearful contests with *Apollyon*; the glory of the Delectable Mount-

ains, and of the Land of Beulah, where roses and myrtles bloom unchilled on the verge of sloping hills, and the veil of the Celestial City being drawn aside, the dreamer at last beholds the golden pavements and the white-robed angels in the paradise of God; this singular mixture of unrestrained imagination and spiritual thought was like the bread of life. Not in all literature was there a book that inspired more unconquerable respect. In the homes of common folk it was placed on the same shelf with the family Bible, and not unfrequently beside the Book of Common Prayer. Its peculiar idiom passed current among "tinkers, mechanics, sailors, and servant girls," but in the course of a few years it conquered the praise of scholars, and is equally appreciated by their most enlightened descendants of the present day. The following note, written by Coleridge, was found upon a blank leaf of a printed copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*:

"I know of no book, the Bible excepted as above all comparison, which I, according to my judgment and experience, could so safely recommend as teaching and enforcing the whole saving truth according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, as the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is, in my conviction, incomparably the best *summa theologiæ evangelicæ* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired."

It would, perhaps, be amiss to neglect another eminent writer and scholar in the time of Dryden, who also wrote in a plain and distinct style for very different subjects and classes of thought. The profound and expansive mind of John Locke aimed at an easy mode of composition, laying aside the involved style of former writers. His sentences are short and clear. No affectation of long

periods, no superficial strains after pompous language; and no one knew better than he the power of a word put in its place. He practiced upon the idea that the simplest expression is the most felicitous.

Among the divines of the 17th century were some of the most eminent scholars and finest writers of our language. Two of the greatest men of the period—Hall and Taylor—illustrate the pulpit eloquence peculiar to the time. It is full of learning, of Greek and Latin, and Scriptural texts; but it is also redundant with striking and tender thoughts, and flows forth with a copiousness and exuberance of splendid English that is unrivaled in modern preaching. “I shall not crave leave,” says Jeremy Taylor,

“that I may remember Jerusalem, and call to mind the pleasures of the temple, the order of her services, the beauty of her buildings, the sweetness of her songs, the decencies of her ministrations, the assiduity and economy of her priests and Levites, the daily sacrifice, and that eternal fire of devotion that went not out by day nor by night; these were the pleasures of our peace, and there is a remanent felicity in the very memory of those spiritual delights, which we then enjoyed as antepasts of heaven and consignations to an immortality of joys.”

And Bishop Hall in his celebrated sermon preached at St. Paul's, 1609, on the “Passion of Our Saviour,” brings the sufferings of the cross to the heart and conscience of his hearers:

“Which of his senses now was not a window to let in sorrow? His eyes saw the tears of his mother and friends, the unthankful demeanor of mankind, the cruel despite of his enemies; his ears heard the revilings and blasphemies of the multitude; and, whether the place were noisome to his scent, his touch felt the nails, his taste the gall. Look up, O all ye beholders, look upon this precious

body, and see what part you can find free. That head, which is adored and trembled at by the angelical spirits, is all raked and harrowed with thorns; that face, of whom it is said, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men,' is all besmeared with the filthy spittle of the Jews, and furrowed with His tears; those eyes, clearer than the sun, are darkened with the shadow of death; those ears, that hear the heavenly comforts of angels, now are filled with the cursed speakings and scoffs of wretched men; those lips, that 'spake as never man spake,' that command the spirits both of light and darkness, are scornfully wet with vinegar and gall; those feet that trample on all the powers of hell—'his enemies are made his footstool'—are now nailed to the footstool of the cross; those hands, that freely sway the sceptre of the heavens, now carry the reed of reproach, and are nailed to the tree of reproach; that whole body, which was conceived by the Holy Ghost, was all scourged, wounded, mangled. This is the outside of his sufferings. Was his heart free? Oh, no; the inner part or soul of this pain, which was unseen, is as far beyond these outward and sensible, as the soul is beyond the body, God's wrath beyond the malice of men."

The words *consignation* and *remanent* in the extract from Taylor are already obsolete, and are now represented by other and better ones. It was doubtless the use of such terms that drew forth this disdainful remonstrance from Dean Swift:

"I defy the greatest divine," he says, "to produce any law which obliges me to comprehend the meaning of *omniscience*, *omnipresence*, *ubiquity*, *attribute*, *beatific vision*, with a thousand others so frequent in pulpits, any more than that of *eccentric*, *idiosyncrasy*, *entity*, and the like."

We notice, also, how gracefully Hall introduces the relative pronoun *that* in a series of clauses instead of the pronoun *which*.

It was an age of religious controversy, and the ministers of the Church of England were called upon to

defend their system against the acutest Catholic writers, and a host of non-conformists of every kind, who were almost their equals, if not their superiors, in popular eloquence. The times required theological exposition and sound reasoning in matters of dispute. Every word was open to attack, and needed to be weighed; and above all it was necessary to say just what was enough to give a clear idea of the subject. Preaching was, therefore, conducted with precision; it was clear and distinct.

“The wonder of the world is the clergy of England,” exclaims Bishop Hall; “so many learned divines, so many eloquent preachers shall in vain be sought elsewhere this day in whatever region under the cope of heaven.”

The sermons of Tillotson and Jewell, of Usher and Bramhall, and Barrow and Stillingfleet, and fifty more besides, are models, filled with figurative language, severe logic, powerful arguments. They were bold and pathetic, and sometimes solemn and sublime. I do not dwell upon their defects, the perplexing digressions and diffusiveness that drew out the discourses to an intolerable length. But wheat has its chaff and gold its dust; let the chaff and the dust go, and we are still presented with a rich and powerful flow of pure English. If to convince the intellect and compel the assent of the reason were the sole object of preaching, an artificial vocabulary would suffice; but to awaken the conscience, to recall the scattered thoughts of the foolish and the careless, to excite the affections, to rouse the deadened heart, to comfort the afflicted, to search into the carnal temper of the soul, these are best moved by Saxon words. When a house is on fire you do not make use of grand words, but cry out, Fire! Fire! So the old preachers

spoke of these tremendous themes in the strong vernacular of their fathers, and made it the model and standard of pulpit compositions.

Thus by the labors of centuries and a long succession of thinkers and writers who had, perhaps blindly and unconsciously, in their different ways, acted to the same end, our language at the close of the 17th century had been polished and its words moulded to express every variety of thought. It had a notable tendency even in the days of Milton to pass the adjective into the substantive and the substantive into the verb. This was a great convenience, generally, especially in expressing the poetical spirit of ideas. There was scarcely a vestige of the Latin or Anglo-Saxon declensions. Even the genitive case, which by a special gift of longevity had lingered so long, was superseded by the sign of the possessive, and Latin words were incorporated without the Latin construction. The possessive personal pronouns, *his*, *hers*, *its*, gave a complete and exact idea of their antecedents, and the simple form of the conjugations improved its appearance and phonetics; while its analytic simplicity expanded its power to repair losses, to preserve terms, to profit by accidents, and to absorb newcomers who had any adequate claim for admission. These modifications had exercised a very great influence upon the form of the language, principally in making its grammar and construction the most easy and natural of any modern tongue. If the copiousness of inflected forms had been infringed, yet the superabundance of verbs and of connecting words might well satisfy every exigency of discourse, express every nicety of observation and the finest shades of meaning. It had a won-

derful correctness and stability in describing thought, in appealing to the imagination, or in moving the senses or the affections. It afforded terms the most exact and striking for the poet and the scholar. Its fidelity to these claims has been sustained as time has rolled on.

CHAPTER XV.

MODERN ENGLISH—CONTINUED AND COMPLETED.

1. The Writers of the 18th Century.
2. Their Use of English, with Comments and Criticisms Thereon.

WHEN we consider the growth of our language, nothing about it appears more striking than the order of its progress. In the first two centuries after the Norman invasion we find a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and the new forms that time and change had introduced—a sort of semi-Saxon, that is now difficult to understand without a certain degree of study. Then came the period of Early English, when the decaying forms used by the old writers have nearly merged into their English dress, and we begin to recognize familiar appearances. This period, however, is marked by great changes; new words take the place of old ones, and the newcomers are generally of Anglo-Norman origin. The infusion is considerable, and in passing from semi-Saxon the language takes what may be almost termed a different mould, that leaves out a great number of the old settlers, and supplies their places with terms that have ever since remained.

The next step in its graded progress is the middle form of English, as used by Chaucer, Lydgate, and Gower; and then we advance to the modern era of our

present literature and conversation. Previous to the 18th century there had been several periods when the language had appeared to be fit for the purposes of literature, as when Chaucer employed it in his *Canterbury Tales*, and Barbour, his contemporary, adapted it to epic poetry. This was followed by the brilliant constellation of Scottish poets in the 16th century, and to this succeeded the memorable outburst of dramatic composition, when Shakespeare and his contemporaries embellished it with their wonderful productions. The 17th century was adorned by Milton and Dryden, but it was reserved for the 18th to show the varied power of our tongue, for then arose a succession of writers in every branch of letters. Whatever there is of ease and elegance in expression can be found in Addison; whatever of terse and pithy strength in Swift, and whatever of the grave and lofty in Gibbon. In the humorous pages of Sterne and Smollett we have the full effect of simple English, and in Defoe the rarest instance of invention, clothed in a garb of words the fittest to give full effect to the fable. In the writings of Goldsmith we have an example of English as transparent and beautiful as the flow of a crystal stream, and in Johnson the turgid and turbid bias of a great mind deceiving itself by a false and vicious style. In the verse of Pope there is the smooth, labored line of faultless metre and a delicious roll of words whose very sound is imitative of their meaning.

But as I intend to speak of these as well as of others in the present chapter, it is not necessary to refer more fully to them here. It is sufficient to say that the 18th century was distinguished for its writings in the vernacular.

The greatest authors had ceased the use of Latin, and even those who were eminent in science or philosophy found their own tongue equal to express with clearness and to make plain and intelligible the abstruse problems of their learning. Hume wrote his history, Bolingbroke his essays, Sir Dugald Stewart his philosophy, Franklin his proverbs, Jonathan Edwards his doctrines, and Young, Thomson, and Burns their effusions in the tongue they lisped when their mothers fed them with her food of kisses. Indeed, there was no phase of thought that was not wrought out by the writers of this period, and their productions will continue to amuse and instruct as long as the language in which they are written shall be understood. The same intense sense of English phraseology is also visible in the memoirs, correspondence, and miscellaneous writings that have come down to us from that age. The letters of Swift and those of Boswell and Johnson, the diary of Pepys and that of Evelyn were not intended to be finished compositions, but were written on the spur of the moment, and give us an idea of the English in ordinary colloquial discourse. All these combined excellences have conferred upon the first half of the century the title of the Augustan Age of our idiom. The language at that period is still considered the highest authority, and is, perhaps, the groundwork of our present good taste in writing. Mr. Blair in his "Lectures upon Rhetoric" (page 120) recommends a practice for the purpose of acquiring a good style in composition. "Take, for instance," he says,

"a page of one of Addison's Spectators, and read it attentively two or three times till we are in full possession of the thoughts it contains ;

then to lay aside the book, to endeavour to write out the passage from memory as well as we can ; and then to compare what we have written with the style of the author. Such an exercise will show us our defects ; will teach us to correct them ; and from the variety of expression which it will exhibit, will conduct us to that which is most beautiful.”

The simple, plain, and forcible style of Dr. Franklin was probably acquired by this manner of writing. He informs us in his memoirs that his father on one occasion pointed out to him a want of elegance in the expression and in the arrangement and perspicuity of his correspondence with a friend upon the subject of an amicable controversy, and feeling the justice of the remark, he became more attentive to language, and resolved to make every effort to improve his style, and he adds :

“ Amidst these resolves an odd volume of the Spectator fell into my hands. This was a publication I had never seen. I bought the volume and read it again and again. I was enchanted with it, thought the style excellent, and wished it were in my power to imitate it. With this view I selected some of the papers, made short summaries of the sense of each period, and put them for a few days aside. I then, without looking at the book, endeavoured to restore the essays to their true form, and to express each thought at length as it was in the original, employing the most appropriate words that occurred to my mind. I afterwards compared my Spectator with the original ; I perceived some faults, which I corrected ; but I found that I wanted a fund of words, if I may so express myself, and a facility of recollecting and employing them, which I thought I should by that time have acquired had I continued to make verses. The continual need of words of the same meaning, but of different lengths for the measure, or of different sounds for the rhyme, would have obliged me to seek for a variety of synonyms, and have rendered me master of them. From this belief, I took some of the tales of the Spectator and turned them into verse ; and after a time when I had sufficiently forgotten them, I again

converted them into prose. Sometimes, also, I mingled all my summaries together ; and a few weeks after endeavoured to arrange them in the best order, before I attempted to form the periods and complete the essays. This I did with a view of acquiring method in the arrangement of my thoughts. On comparing afterwards my performance with the original, many faults were apparent, which I corrected ; but I had sometimes the satisfaction to think that, in certain particulars of little importance, I had been fortunate enough to improve the order of thought or the style ; and this encouraged me to hope that I should succeed in time in writing decently in the English language, which was one of the great objects of my ambition."

Of all the writers of that period it is generally admitted that Dean Swift represents better than any other the Saxon genius of our speech, and Samuel Johnson its Latinized and ambitious mode of expression. The former never resorted like the latter to Latin neologisms to eke out his phrases, unless the Saxon and Norman powers of our language did not furnish him with terms sufficiently full to express his meaning. In his style we find home-bred English united to genius, and we are pleased as much with the vigor and ease of his diction as with the pungency of his wit. He gives us an example of his views on this subject in a letter to a young clergyman, which I quote from Rosco's edition of his works : (Vol. v., p. 307.)

"I should likewise have been glad, if you had applied yourself a little more to the study of the English language than I fear you have done ; the neglect whereof is one of the most general defects among scholars of this kingdom, who seem not to have the least conception of a style, but run on in a kind of flat phraseology peculiar to the nation ; neither do I perceive that any person either finds or acknowledges his wants upon this head, or in the least desires to have them supplied. *Proper words in proper places* make the true definition of a style."

He admonishes against the frequent use of obscure terms and hard words, about which he says :

“ And I defy the greatest divine to produce any law, either of God or man, which obliges me to comprehend the meaning of *omniscience, omnipresence, ubiquity, attribute, beatific vision*, with a thousand others so frequent in pulpits, any more than that of *eccentric, idiosyncrasy, entity*, and the like.”

These passages contain about one hundred and fifty words, aside from those in Italics. Only twenty of the whole flight are dissyllables, about four trisyllables, and the words of greater length are *phraseology, disquisition, remedied*, and *abilities*. It would be difficult to supply the place of these with shorter or clearer terms, and it will be observed that none of them are hard words, and though derived from the Latin, they are just as English as their Saxon neighbors. The whole quotations seem to be in accordance with his own rule of proper words in proper places. Swift was a journalist, from 1710 to 1713, during his stay in London. Disappointed in not being made a bishop by the Whigs, who were in power, he became a Tory, and wrote powerful articles in the interest of that party for the “*Examiner*,” and produced at the same time a constant flow of pamphlets, libels, and essays. He developed his ideas with such clearness, good sense, and in such racy and vigorous English, that the common and middle classes of the people could comprehend and enjoy all he wrote. He had not much to serve as models. The press was of recent origin. The first daily journal in England appeared in 1702, and yet the style of his writings became so popular that his historical tract upon the conduct of the allies in the war then pending, rendered the Treaty

of Utrecht possible and the peace of Europe which followed it. He brought out the "Tale of a Tub" while in London, and the "Travels of Gulliver," the "Drapier Letters," besides poems and essays on politics, religion, and literature after he finally settled in Ireland. His prolific pen teemed with fictions, that conveyed his morbid views of the world and the multiplied passions and characters it produces. He wrote without love or sympathy, and used his prodigious powers as the terrible weapons of his personal hates. He was the "greatest genius" and "the most unhappy in history." But there is no difficulty in comprehending the meaning of his language. The sentences are such as might be casually met with in any commonly written letter or note, or even in good colloquial English; and although the diabolical malice of his satire cannot be admired, it is uttered in an English garb so unambiguous as to add to its directness and sting. The syntactical construction is united by our particles into the clearest order of expression, and perhaps in a manner as distinct and forcible as if it had been rendered with a greater supply of Latin derivatives and with the sonorous swell of the Latin construction. Especially in the "Journal to Stella" the periods are short, simple, and complete, and there is an apparent community of feeling nowhere else to be found in his writings. The letters and historical sketches of the Dean are remarkable for the purity of their idiom. Its metal has the ring of the Saxon ore from which it ran, and we also observe that it was not only of Saxon parentage, but that the unassuming air of the words and their tendency to monosyllablism are indeed the secret of its extraordinary force and precision.

It cannot be said of the Dean that he did not use other words than those of a Saxon origin, but only that he used them less sparingly than his contemporaries. Whoever would form an overstrained opinion regarding this great and unhappy genius ought to peruse the sketch of his life and work in the brilliant pages of Taine's History of English Literature.

It is often asserted that Dr. Johnson's excessive style offers a wonderful contrast to that of the writer we have just been considering. His sentences are padded and corpulent with useless epithets, and examples of this can be cited from many of his writings. We ought not, however, to make an invidious selection solely for animadversion, and withhold all notice whatever from the extraordinary merits and elegance that pervade considerable portions of his literary work. For instance, in 91 of the *Idler*, he has an essay upon the sufficiency of the English language, addressed to our common sense in dignified and plain English :

“Every man is more speedily instructed in his own language than by any other ; before we search the rest of the world for teachers, let us try whether we may not spare our trouble by finding them at home. The riches of the English language are much greater than they are commonly supposed. * * Of our poets I need say little, because they are perhaps the only authors to whom their country has done justice. We consider the whole succession, from Spenser to Pope, as superior to any names which the Continent can boast ; and, therefore, the poets of other nations, however familiarly they may be sometimes mentioned, are very little read, except by those who design to borrow their beauties. * * There is, I think, not one of the liberal arts which may not be completely learned in the English language. He that searches after mathematical knowledge may busy himself among his own countrymen, and will find one or other able to instruct him in every part of their abstruse sciences.

He that is delighted with experiments, and wishes to know the nature of bodies from certain and visible effects, is happily placed where the mechanical philosophy was first established by a public institution, and from which it has spread to other countries."

He then speaks of the extraordinary facilities in English for studies in philology, its superiority in works on theology, metaphysics, its profound investigations in matters of government and law, and concludes with the following sentence :

"Thus copiously instructive is the English language, and thus needless is all recourse to foreign writers. Let us not, therefore, make our neighbours proud by soliciting help which we do not want, nor discourage our own industry by difficulties which we need not suffer."

It may seem strange that the writer of these examples should be blamed with an attempt to emasculate the vigorous tongue of our ancestors, upon which he bestows such genuine admiration, and to substitute an Italian or Latin jargon in its place. It is not the Latinity of his diction which offends, but his bad and affected style. His most brilliant passages appear perfectly artificial, yet his great practice may have enabled him to conceal the labor by which they were formed ; passages, too, that bear the impress of ponderous effort and of the smoke of midnight oil, may after all have been unstudied and thrown off without any strain but that of long cultivated habit in a fixed style. His individual words are much like Artemus Ward's regiment of soldiers, composed of brigadier-generals. A proposition is stated in grave and awful pomp, and is immediately followed by another that perhaps destroys its importance, or obscures its meaning. He appears to have matured this

practice in his earliest works. It is visible in his latest. Take the following sentence from his comparison of Dryden and Pope as an example of the kind of practice alluded to :

“ Dryden knew more of men in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners. The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainty in that of Pope.”

One more example will suffice. In speaking of Doctor Young's satires entitled “The Love of Fame the Universal Passion,” he writes in his Lives of the English Poets that it is a very great performance :

“ It is said to be a series of epigrams, and if it be, it is what the author intended ; his endeavour was at the production of striking distichs and pointed sentences, and his distichs have the weight of solid sentiments, and his points the sharpness of resistless truth. His characters are often selected with discernment, and drawn with nicety ; his illustrations are often happy and his reflections often just. His species of satire is between those of Horace and Juvenal ; he has the gayety of Horace without his laxity of numbers, and the morality of Juvenal with greater variety of images.”

His balanced sentences and antitheses are not the way in which men either think or talk, and this style of language is now of all other mannerisms the most avoided, except from its facility to be caricatured or burlesqued. When we would express a happy or noble turn of thought, we avoid the long-linked vocables in his frosty euphonisms ; and modern authors agree in reproaching his obscure and brilliant verbiage. The affectation of his language, his pretentious metaphors, his antitheses *ad infinitum*, and his rage for speaking like nobody else, have long since been consigned to

oblivion; and the reputation of the writings which were supposed to be immortal in his own generation, have faded day by day from his time to ours; he is not remembered by his works as an author, but by his peculiarities as a man, and these, perhaps, have been preserved because Boswell has inscribed them in the apotheosis of his idol. He had models of genuine English in the great romances of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne, as well as in other works that were not romances, such as Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, Addison's *Spectator*, Steele's essays, and the clear and polished style of Bolingbroke. The age could also boast of Hume and Robertson, Sir Dugald Stewart, and Jonathan Edwards, whose treatise on the freedom of the will is still regarded as a masterpiece in theological literature. Goldsmith and Burke were his associates, and he had himself declared that *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was composed in the most home-bred English, was the only uninspired book except *Don Quixote* which the reader ever wished were longer. The English novels and essays just mentioned had gained an unparalleled popularity, and were supposed to have established the standard of Augustan elegance in England. Johnson's influence must have been great, indeed, to impose his literary ways upon such an age. He was the literary tyrant of his century. His influence is said to be visible in books that are far more celebrated than any of his own, and to have formed the basis of the brilliant and composite dialect of Gibbon. This claim may, however, well be questioned, since the biographer of the great historian informs us that the writers Gibbon had habitually before his eyes were Pascal and Montesquieu,

until his style of diction was completely formed.

After all, it cannot be fairly averred that Johnson coins new words, or distorts the sense of old ones; but he twists them into unidiomatic and fantastic shapes, and his mannerism is what Coleridge would call *architectural*, which is now safe for nobody to imitate. Mr. Weisse refers to Sir James Mackintosh as one who finds fault with Johnson because he uses so many Latin words, and points out the fact that Sir James uses them more frequently than Johnson. Among the various estimates of the different languages that compose our own, we may take the following analysis as an approximation. In the whole vocabulary the proportions in general use are about:

Anglo-Saxon	60
Latin and French	30
Greek	5
	95

leaving five per cent. to be attributed to other words, of which we are daily acquiring fresh supplies. Perhaps by counting all the words in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary there would be an unexpected parity between these ingredients. No writer can, therefore, dispense with the rich Latin infusions, which, when quite naturalized, are just as English as the Saxon radicals. The numerical relations of these words naturally depend upon the genius, taste, and somewhat upon the education of the author. We find the Latin parts of speech playing an important part in the noblest prose and even in the most brilliant poetical compositions. The relative proportions of these words are not much greater in Johnson's works than in those of many other standard authors.

For instance, in *Paradise Lost*, 80 words out of a hundred are Anglo-Saxon; Macaulay, 75; Prescott, 77; Gibbon, 70; Johnson, 72; while Pope, his contemporary, has only four per cent. more Latin terms than Chaucer, who wrote over three hundred years before. A large proportion of our trisyllables and most all of our polysyllables are from a Latin source, and from it we derive a prodigal abundance of words ending in *tion*, *ity*, *ate*, and *ent*. Any one can recall hundreds of these. The charge against Johnson is, therefore, only one of degree, and not a very serious one at that. Perhaps it was not a source of certain improvement in his case, but it would appear that upon the whole our words from Rome are useful and indispensable to our composite English. We live in this composite English. It resounds in our ears. We think in it. We love and pray in it; and from the ruins of the temple erected to the Roman Muses, we select beautiful terms and words of deep meaning with which to embellish our mother tongue just as we continue to imitate its graces in our works of art.

As Johnson uses none but English words, or such foreign ones as were denizen in the language of his time, it is the stilted style of the great colossus that is now spoken of by way of derision as Johnsonese. He wanted "big words for big thinking." He had not even this excuse, for his excessive reflections are upon the most commonplace subjects. He made no discoveries in science or philosophy, and there is scarcely what is worthy of being called an original idea in his volumes. In the preface to his folio dictionary, Dr. Johnson informs us that he studiously endeavored to collect examples and authorities from the writings before the

Restoration, which he regarded as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of diction; and that he has fixed Sidney's work (1638) as the boundary beyond which he made few excursions. I believe he has not a single example or authority from the writers of Early English. Those authors most assuredly are not models in literature, but to them is due the high honor of having fixed our language, and of having put an end to all chance of its ever becoming Romance or Gaulish. They secured its formation at a very critical period of its infancy, and gave it a definite character, from which Chaucer drew the lingual ingredients of his immortal verse, and in which Wickliffe clothed his translation of the Bible. Early English was the crucible through which our language passed to its maturity and splendor.

Perhaps it is a proper subject of regret that the great lexicographer outlawed the literary remains of that period, since they stand in such useful relationship and affinity to our vernacular. It has been said the vices of a style are the exact consequence of the vices of the thoughts. The reproach, therefore, falls upon the vices of the thoughts, and if these are extremely fine and singular, they are necessarily expressed in words and phrases that are rarely seen together. In answer to this it may be remarked that whatever can only be expressed at the expense of clearness and the good use of language is not worth the trouble of being expressed at all. Certain shades of sentiment, sometimes morbid, and sometimes strained, are not worth the trouble of being studied; and there can be no doubt that the more delicate the shades of character, or the more profound the subject to be investigated, the words which serve to

impress or explain them ought to be clear and precise. Many writers of Johnson's own time can be referred to whose works are examples of elegant and genuine diction, to say nothing of Swift, and Addison, and Bolingbroke, the names of Sir Dugald Stewart, John Locke, and Dr. Thomas Reid, who, in proportion as the subjects of their observations were abstruse, endeavored to render themselves more intelligible and to write in a manner similar to the ordinary use of language. Mr. Marsh appears to approve of Macaulay's views expressed in the *Edinburgh Review* :

“Johnson's conversation appears to have been quite equal to his writings in matter, and far superior to them in manner. When he talked he clothed his wit and his sense in forcible and natural expressions. As soon as he took his pen in his hand to write for the public, his style became systematically vicious. All his books are written in a learned language, which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse ; in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love ; in a language in which nobody ever thinks. It is clear that Johnson himself did not think in the dialect in which he wrote. The expressions which came first to his tongue were simple, energetic, and picturesque. When he wrote for publication, he did his sentences out of English into Johnsonese.”

Dean Swift belonged to the beginning of the 18th century, and Dr. Johnson to its close. But in the intermediate time the language was cultivated by a multitude of writers, who exhibited the genius of the age in an idiom of purely literary English, and at the same time there flourished perhaps the greatest orators the world has ever seen—Burke and Erskine, Chatham and Fox, Patrick Henry and old Samuel Adams. Some modern writers like Dr. Gregory think that previous authors are scarcely to be considered authority upon

questions of pure English. However that may be, it was certainly an era of great importance in the history of our speech.

Spain was the country of the romance writers. It was the land where Cervantes and Le Sage laid the scenes of their inimitable stories. But all at once a change takes place. An interest is taken in other romances. New names break out—those of Defoe, of Fielding, of Sterne, of Steele, of Swift, of Addison, and Smollett. These names become familiar on the Continent as well as on the Island. Translations are made into French of “Robinson Crusoe,” of the comedies of Steele, of the essays of Addison, and the voyages of Gulliver. A system of literary exchanges is established—a commonwealth of ideas. England can write without borrowing or imitating, and takes her place as speaking and writing one of the great literary languages of Europe. Anthony Provost, a prolific French author, whose works amount to 170 volumes, crowns his labors by translating the three great novels of Richardson—“Pamela,” “Clarisse,” and “Grandison,” and offers them in their own language to his countrymen. If the author of “Joseph Andrews” continues to imitate the humor of Le Sage, on the other hand Provost imitates Richardson; and Rousseau, who knows him only through the translations of Provost, imitates and, perhaps, surpasses him in his “Nouvelle Heloise.” They translate “Tom Jones,” and Grimm and Le Harpe proclaim it the *chef-d'œuvre* of modern romance. Diderot reads and praises Pamela and Clarisse as finer than anything in French romance, and Madame du Deffand prefers Tom Jones to “Gil Blas,” while Marivaux, another famous

author, writes up "Le Spectateur Francois" in imitation of Addison. Few Frenchmen could read English at that day, but its study soon became popular, and a knowledge of it spread all over France and, indeed, the entire Continent.

The English novels just mentioned strike out a new vein. The loves and adventures of nobles and princes are no longer the themes of romantic interest; but the characters are drawn from the ordinary places and pursuits of life and from the natural emotions and dispositions of men and women. *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, and *Peregrine Pickle* are people who have not very desirable social conditions, and even *Sir Roger de Coverley*, although a knight, is delineated in the inimitable papers of Steele and Addison as simply an example of a country gentleman, rather than an heroic noble. The immortal "Don Quixote" was a satire upon chivalry, and Gil Blas described the life and adventures of a vagabond; but the new English novel was a representation of living manners and the imitations of human life. The honor of rendering the novel capable of these new and ambitious powers, beyond any contest, belongs to the English language. These writers were, however, guilty of introducing vulgar and low words and gross impurities of expression into their compositions. Even Addison is not free from this reproach. The evil was in some degree owing to the universal corruption of taste that came from the tainted literature of the Restoration. To defile our language is worse than to debase the gold coin of the country. And at the present day have we not works of fiction as impure in suggestion as those of Mrs. Behn or those by Rochester and Etherage? Such unpleasant

features do not, however, destroy the merits of these extraordinary productions. The extravagance of delineation, that is the charm of imaginative literature, can only be made to look like reality by an easy flow of the language, which gives to the incidents of the story an appearance as if they were among the probable things of life. We all remember the pathetic account of the *Lyons Donkey* in "Tristram Shandy." It is the story of a poor ass with which *Tristram* forms an imaginary conversation, and the cast of the language gives an appearance of reality to the impossibility. It is the speech of nature, the language of a sentiment that affects us most. There are many examples of the same kind in the *Spectator* and *Tattler*. In one of the numbers we are told of a place so far north that words are congealed or frozen as soon as spoken by the intense cold, and thawed out long afterwards, when they are heard as if just uttered. In others we are told of the transmigration of a monkey, the dissection of a beau's head and a coquette's heart, and of the observations of *Sir Roger de Coverley* upon the performance at the theatre. These pieces derive their merit and exquisite humor from the plain unaffected English sense of the words, which look so much like reality as to overcome the improbability of the story. It is the turn of the language more than anything else that produces this magical effect.

Mrs. Barbauld edited a collection of English novels of the time of Anne (1701-1714), and she affirms that there were more good writers in this walk living in her day than at any period since that of Richardson and Fielding. Many of these were insignificant, and a few of them like those of Mrs. Behn were vile, but the works

contributed by Ann Radcliffe, Madame D'Arblay, and Maria Edgeworth marked the intellectual progress of our language, and made amends for the loose compositions that time has thrown into oblivion. The literary taste for works of this kind has increased with time. Probably the number of new novels annually published in Great Britain may be estimated by the hundred, exclusive of reprints and periodical serials. The annual impressions in the United States, where everybody reads, amount to several hundred more, and perhaps this country bears the palm in this kind of literary fecundity; so that a careful computation would probably show a total production of not less than a thousand new works of this description poured out each year by the press in the English language alone, to say nothing of translations from other countries.

The 18th century produced a great deal of poetry, some of which was not at all above mediocrity, and a portion of it, but by no means the largest, possesses an extraordinary degree of merit. Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Pope's "Rape of the Lock," a few hundred lines from Goldsmith, Collins's "Ode to the Passions," Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts," Beattie's "Minstrel," Thomson's "Seasons," Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night," his "Tam O'Shanter," and his immortal songs constitute a refulgent treasure of poetical literature that no other language could probably equal. Perhaps Byron, whose extraordinary mastery of the poetic art has placed him in the opinion of many good judges at its head, was not so very far out of the way in his estimation of the Rape of the Lock, for it is a poem altogether unique, in which humor and fancy are

revealed in many beautiful expressions, and where sentiment and language conform to each other with singular grace and harmony. If the purity and power of a style depend upon the choice of words, then no one has ever surpassed that of Pope in this poem. The estimate of his works has varied more than that of any other author of the 18th century; Taine denies him the laurel of poetic genius, and Byron thinks him the greatest moral poet of any age or in any language. The former affects to crush him, as if actuated by a feeling of scorn, and pours out his usual avalanche of metaphors, antitheses, and adjectives; but we have only to open a volume of Pope, and the whizzing pyrotechnics of the critic fade away before a brighter radiance than his own. No poet has a richer store of words, and none, not even Shakespeare, has written so many verses that have become current maxims in our language.

“ Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.”

Human language has never so portrayed the infinite immensity of love as in “Eloisa to Abelard”; and the following extract describing the “blameless Vestal’s lot,” with not more than one Latin derivative to a line, derives the sinew and melody from the Saxon and Old English words, that sprinkle the verse like flowers:

“ Grace shines around her with serenest beams,
And whispering angels prompt her golden dreams.
For her the unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes;
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing;
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day.”

In the expression *shines around her* all the vowels are present and so sequent as to produce the most melodious combinations. No language can match the phrase *whispering angels* in startling solemnity, nor the pellucid flow of the *rose of Eden blooms*. These are among the debts we owe the crisp Saxon radicals we have preserved in all their plastic beauty. Dryden observed in speaking upon the difficulties of English that poetry requires ornament, and that this was not to be had from our old Teutonic monosyllables, especially as these were clogged with consonants, which, he said, were the dead weight of our mother tongue. This must be accounted a very singular complaint of the great poet, who translated Virgil into the vernacular in a style that combines all the known delicacies and beauties practiced by the ancients. He commences that masterpiece with a line of these despised *Teutonic monosyllables*:

Arms and the man I sing, who, forced by fate—

Our vowels and consonants are the same as those in other European languages, only that we have somewhat changed the sound of the former, and they have precisely the same power as in the Latin itself. It would seem, therefore, that the same sequence and art in placing them would produce the harmony requisite in good versification. Indeed, poetry eschews long words with horror, and resorts to the short etymons on account of their brevity and force. Especially is this the case when a striking truth or a pathetic chord of the human heart is to be touched. Take, for instance, these lines from Young's Night Thoughts:

“The bell strikes one. We take no note of time,
But from its loss; to give it then a tongue

Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke
I feel the solemn sound."

"How empty learning, and how vain is art,
But as it mends the life and guides the heart."

The "In Memoriam" of Tennyson is a poem of monosyllables, and its harmony and pathos is transmitted to every soul that reads it.

I may be pardoned for giving the following poetical descriptions of Night, sable goddess, the first by Milton and the last by Young:

"Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleas'd; now glow'd the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."

"Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world.
Silence how dead! and darkness how profound!
Nor eye nor listening ear an object finds;
Creation sleeps. 'Tis as the general pulse
Of life stood still, and Nature made a pause;
An awful pause! prophetic of her end.
And let her prophecy be soon fulfill'd;
Fate drop the curtain; I can lose no more."

It will be seen that the words in these extracts are derived in quite unequal portions from among those of one syllable and those of more than one, and this com-

parison may serve to convince us that the bulk of English words in current use is from the primitive stock of our language; but it is equally evident that not only the beauty but much of the strength is produced by the Latin terms with which they are interwoven. The lines just quoted will undoubtedly confirm this observation. I may remark that they seem to me to be the greatest triumph of blank verse. In both passages the images are set in so clear a light that it is impossible to be blind to them. Excluding one proper name, they contain about one hundred and fifty words, and of this number only about twenty-five or thirty are of Latin derivation, but they add a peculiar majesty to these memorable delineations, and yield the æsthetic melody upon which the regularity of the verse moves on. Hundreds of passages could be selected almost as sublime as these, in which are found the same combinations of classical and Gothic elements.

It is not my intention to examine our language as it is presented during the present century. I have but space to say that among its more marked features its literature abounds in words that come from the most widely separated portions of the earth, and yet scarcely any of these foreigners are admitted into common use, unless they can offer an equivalent for the honor of membership. The widest liberty of expansion has only added to the vigor and delicacy of our English tongue. To place it on a procrustean bed would destroy its vital independence; and it may be safely affirmed that its culture has received more care, and the diffusion of its more elegant forms has become more general within the last three quarters of a century than at any previous

period. Our knowledge of it comes from personal experience and observation. We cannot converse with our neighbors or read the daily papers without coming in direct contact with its every day idiom. It is an object lesson that instructs us hourly in our social and business intercourse. There is but little motive to illustrate it by citations from authors since it is so constant in our experience, so common in our practice. Perhaps the great mass of those who speak it do not realize the necessity of observing the standard of good English. Its free use offers incessant opportunities for its abuse, but like the running stream that receives an impurity it runs clear and sparkling again just beyond. To criticise its present use or misuse is a work that is splendidly performed by writers like French, Moon, Richard Grant White, and others, who expose the inaccuracies committed by carelessness and indifference. I have neither time nor space to enter upon a field so well occupied already, and in which most valuable service has been performed.

In the next and closing chapter I shall give my views touching the present rank and position of English among the living languages of the world. Before, however, dwelling upon that subject, I here introduce the opinion of an eminent philologist who has made English literature a careful study, and who deliberately pays it the following eloquent tribute:

“Of the English language in general it may be confidently affirmed that it yields to no other—either ancient or modern—in the excellence and variety of its powers; in its actual attainments, or its susceptibility of improvement. Its diction is copious, varied, expressive, and melodious; its formation simple and obvious, yet

clear and adequate ; its construction natural and easy, yet nervous and bold. It is capable of fulfilling all the purposes of the poet, the orator, or the philosopher, of gratifying the ear, moving the passions, informing the reason, or affecting the heart. It is equally adapted to the terrible or the gentle, the majestic or familiar, the serious or the gay. The writer may give full scope to his imagination, unlimited range to his fancy ; he may observe mankind with minute attention, or inquire into truth with subtle discrimination ; if his images be distinct, and his conceptions accurate, he shall not want expression to sustain his highest flights, and the elegance and splendour of his words shall at least equal the grace and dignity of the thoughts." (Walker, English Prose. Introduction.)

CHAPTER XVI.

1. Present Rank and Condition of English Among the Living Languages of the World.
2. Its Diffusion, and the Prospect of Its General Use.

HAVING traced the origin and history of our English down to the beginning of the 19th century, I shall dwell in this closing chapter upon its present condition among the languages of the world.

We can scarcely estimate the prodigious power of the English language in propagating its own use. It was a saying of the ancients that if a man were cast away upon a strange island he would soon learn the native tongue sufficiently to make known his wants and desires; so if a people were to lose their native tongue they would soon invent one to take its place. That which distinguishes English today is its diffusion everywhere. It is spoken by a race that covers the earth with its business and ideas. The unparalleled numbers by whom it is spoken and written, and their increase and influence in every part of the globe, give it a position among the languages of mankind such as no other has enjoyed since the Roman tongue became extinct. There is a universal demand for English. It is the language of commerce and finance, and has been accepted in diplomacy and social intercourse. In traveling you will find it spoken wherever you go, and for whatever

you want. There is no need of learning a foreign language, unless for ornament. Your own has become cosmopolitan. We will refer to its dissemination further on.

Another of its great features is its richness in synonyms, and the extent and variety of its vocabulary. This is a convenience that gives it a decided superiority over that spoken anywhere else. The gains it has made during the present century have been owing to the stupendous growth in knowledge and invention. Useful experiments have revealed grander secrets in medicine, chemistry, and astronomy. New countries have been explored, new avenues of trade opened up, and the whole ethical and mental conditions of mankind subjected to the most searching analysis; while under the light of modern engineering, improvements have been introduced into the pursuits of daily life, and into all the industries that give employment to the race. New words have been compounded, or old ones have been enlarged, to express these new ideas, and their use has been sanctioned without regard to the etymological tinkering that disfigures so many of them. Each science brings its peculiar nomenclature, and every trade its phrases and catch-words. Many of these will drop out when they become useless. The additions thus made to our vocabulary are immense, and the lexicographers can scarcely keep up with the claims of the newcomers for admission into complete fellowship with the older denizens. Some have feared that the language itself would suffer from so great an infusion of new elements, but this danger can easily be averted by requiring the strangers to put on an English dress, and to add such prefixes and

suffixes as will conform them to our declensions and conjugations, for if we adhere to our forms of syntax the language will suffer no modification that will affect its structure or character. We have seen that it is not an original one, but is composed of polyglot constituents, gathered from all the tongues spoken by civilized man; and many of its components have come from barbarous races, who have no system of speech but that which expresses the fewest possible ideas. It is, however, of the first importance that we keep a strict surveillance over these recruits, and admit none but those which can prove their claim to a useful place and purpose.

There is a modern theory that a child should learn to read before he learns the alphabet. This is not a very strange idea when we consider that he learns to speak before he learns to write. There are many advantages in this practice, for by it the mind is trained to think and put words together, while the alphabet is unconsciously absorbed. This is the method of teaching now pursued, and the pupil learns to read in a shorter period of time than it formerly took to learn the alphabet alone, and he acquires the art of reading, writing, and language together. These three branches were formerly taught separately, and each had its full course of study, but by the modern system they are but one study, and there is an immense economy of time and patience. The old way was to study grammar first, which few children could understand, and years were consumed without obtaining anything but a memorized routine of abstract rules that contained little or no meaning to their minds. But grammar is now practically taught with reading, writing, and spelling. In other words,

they are taught the proper use of language, the spelling of words and reading all together, not by rote lessons, but by actually doing the work themselves. Here the black-board has been of great assistance. The teacher, for instance, writes an exercise upon it, and the pupil is called upon to point out the words of which it is composed, the letters in the words, and how they are arranged in order to express an idea. In a more advanced stage the pupil learns to write a sentence given out by the teacher. Then an object is placed before him—a stone, a leaf, a plant, or anything with color and form, which he describes in writing. It is really surprising how quickly and easily he acquires the use of language, and how clearly he expresses thought. These lessons offer excellent opportunities to learn four or five branches at once, that were formerly taught separately and usually occupied years of wearisome study.

The conception of making our English tongue a universal study and impressing it upon the minds of the rising generation, is a symptom almost exclusively of the 19th century. We cannot but think that when sixty or a hundred millions of people are thus brought up in its knowledge and purity, it will greatly advance its progress everywhere. There is but one literature in our widely diffused English, and whatever of improvement is made in one region will find a passport throughout the whole extent of its widely spread empire, and it is not improbable that the mould it may receive here will affect it in London as much as in Washington.

There is nothing more striking in the history of our language than the great variety of dialects to which it has given rise. We have seen the three principal ones

that distinguished Early English, but these were infinitely varied by shades of difference in the adjacent portions of the country, and even today you can tell from what part of the British Isles a man comes by the peculiarities of his dialect alone. In the United States the distinctions are not so marked, but still they afford some basis to justify the license of the dialectic novelist and song writer. These are, however, gross exaggerations, that seldom occur except in extremely rare circumstances and within very narrow limits. We need scarcely take any account of the negro patois, for it is confined to a class that exercises no influence as yet upon either language or literature. This diversity of dialects has probably exercised an unfavorable influence upon the purity of our tongue, and it is not desirable that its diffusion should carry these differences along with it. It is a remarkable fact that they did not cross the ocean in the Mayflower, nor land upon the banks of the James. The Puritans and the Cavaliers emigrated from the home of some particular dialect, but it did not seem to find a place in the new settlements, and we inherit our speech from these stocks singularly free from British provincialisms, and perhaps this is the reason that it is spoken in this country with greater general uniformity and purity than in any other quarter of the globe, except among the educated classes, who speak it the same everywhere. When we consider the immense increase in our population—the many millions that are added to it with every decade—we cannot but feel that the people of this country will exercise a very great influence upon the scope and fortune of the English tongue. We are only a century old, and before another one rolls

away it is estimated that we will not fall short of 480 millions. This enormous population speaking the same language will present to the philologist a grand spectacle, that will excite his wonder at its growth throughout the vast regions of our country and of its mighty Anglo-Saxon power and influence.

There are many people who think it a wonderful accomplishment to speak French or German, who cannot speak their own language with propriety. I would find no fault with their knowing these languages, but I would admonish our young friends that it is better for them to understand English than any other, for we can speak of it no longer as an inferior tongue, and it is distinguished among them all for terseness and strength. It is no longer decent to speak poor French instead of your own sweet and beautiful English. If our young ladies would study it with the same diligence that they do a foreign tongue, they would charm and delight the foreigners with whom they affect to converse in their native idiom. I hold that there is nothing in the social amenities of society more attractive than the conversation of our own women. There is a peculiar ingenuousness in their selection of words, and a picturesqueness in their ideas that make them very charming; and I am surprised that their education in their mother tongue is not regarded as of far more importance than the factitious display in either French or German. It is well enough for those of other nations to learn English, because it is spreading all over the globe, and cannot be overlooked by those who expect to hold intercourse with the world. Fortunately this is not imposed upon Americans unless they intend to reside abroad,

or to spend much of their time in some other country, or engage in trade with other nations.

In the early part of this chapter I referred to the wide-spread dissemination of the English, and I now revert to that suggestion. It is estimated that the present population of the world is not less than fourteen hundred millions. Of this number more than one seventh speak English, and probably more than one third are under Anglo-Saxon rule. They are more numerous than those who speak any of the Indo-European languages. The dependencies and colonies of Great Britain alone cover about one sixth of the land surface of the earth, and to this must be added the vast territories of the United States. Of the available territory in the temperate zones and Australasia eighty per cent. is calculated to belong to the Anglo-Saxon race. English is as strong and aggressive as those who speak it, and drives other tongues out wherever it gains a foothold. The discovery of the Mississippi having been made by her emigrants and missionaries, gave to France that stupendous valley and extended her possessions from Quebec to the Gulf of Mexico. Her settlements upon its banks extended a thousand miles above the ocean, and the language of the grand nation was the only one spoken from the Lakes to the Gulf. At length the Anglo-Saxons set foot upon its soil, and soon established their supremacy, developing the resources of this great region, and prepared it for the order and freedom of our institutions; and now English is spoken by the millions that occupy it, except an inconsiderable number of Canadian-French and a bare vestige of the same race in the precincts of New Orleans. It may seem dream-

like and mythical to the new generations that previous to our war with Mexico the language of Spain extended over the Pacific slope, Arizona, and New Mexico, but its accent has died out, and in its place we have created a new empire of English speech. Indeed, when we consider the English speaking races we cannot help our surprise at its marvelous growth and diffusion. At the beginning of the 12th century, when English may be said to have become a national language, the population of the British Isles did not exceed all told much over two millions. This, of course, is only a proximate calculation, for no enumeration of the inhabitants was ever made in those remote days ; and war, pestilence, and famine were so destructive that there was no increase for several centuries. The London of today contains more than three times that number, and the United Kingdom and Ireland will not fall short of forty-four millions. The English speaking peoples are greatly on the increase, and are rapidly extending their territorial limits and their speech. In the United States upon the most moderate basis it is calculated that the current census will not fall short of sixty-five millions, while Canada and the British possessions show several millions more. A great part of the West Indies and all along the shores of the Caribbean Sea have been brought into the English speaking dominion. From the Bermudas to the Bahamas it constitutes the language of travel and commerce, and is the popular dialect of the people throughout those widely extended archipelagos. It is firmly planted in British Honduras, in Demerara, and the Belize. It has, of course, followed the British acquisitions in Venezuela, which are said to be three times as large as New York and New England,

and abounding in all sorts of natural riches. The Isthmian Canal is carrying it across from sea to sea. On the Pacific shores it is spoken from the point where Alaska touches the confines of human habitations down the entire coast to where the equator divides the hemispheres. Crossing over to India and other parts of Asia, there are several millions who can and do speak English with ease and fluency. The stately Burmese and the warlike Afghans are proud to learn a few of its words, and the pious Hindoo shows his appreciation whenever he has an opportunity to use it. This is especially the case from Bombay and Calcutta to Ceylon. It has made its mark on the Malayan Peninsula and Hong Kong, and is making its way to Canton. All the semi-civilized races of Southern Asia are familiar with its sound. It is ready to spring upon and overrun Corea, and is taught in the schools of Japan.

In Africa the prospects of the English language are on a scale of unexampled magnitude. It appropriates the vast regions of Bechuana Land, Natal, and Cape Colony, and runs along the western side over Sierra Leone, Logos, Buthurst, and the gold coast. The explorations of Livingston and Stanley have borne it along the rivers and forests of the Dark Continent, where it is destined to make for itself a home, as it has on the banks of the Ganges and Mississippi. By the treaty between Great Britain, Germany, and the Congo State, the provinces of England constitute one of the largest territorial divisions on the new map of Africa. They stretch away into the interior, upon the margins of gigantic rivers, until they reach the Zambezi in the southeast, in close

proximity with her colonies on the island of Zanzibar near the east coast. She also rules Egypt, holds both sides of the Arabian Gulf, with several groups of islands in the Arabian Sea to protect her route to India. The British flag flies nearly around the whole Continent.

The islands on which English is spoken are very numerous—all over the earth from Heligoland to Polynesia, and from Australia to Yokohama. At a distance of 2300 miles from San Francisco lies the Hawaiian group, the natural stopping place for the trade and shipping of the United States on the route to Australia and Asia. It may very justly be called an American colony, for its language is ours, as are most of its business and capital. A little further to the east and south it cuts the equator, and is spoken on many of the islands in the great archipelagos, which at near intervals are thickly scattered in these remote waters. We find a new world of English in Australia, which is an empire in itself, with outposts in New Guinea, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, and many other clusters that dot the surrounding ocean. From the distant points of the Indian seas our speech travels home by the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, having made the tour of the world and swept the round earth as the vast field of its wonderful achievements. Its ever increasing area also gives it great prominence in the eyes of the linguist, for it can be made applicable to all the business and commerce of the world, and it is not a wild conjecture that it may soon be spoken in every district of every country on the face of the earth. It sweeps over oceans, mountains, and continents, and penetrates into the most hopeless barbarisms, to find unknown races, unheard of

tongues, and raises its voice in the wildernesses of Africa and the jungles of India, in the polar regions of eternal snow, and in the burning sands of the desert. There does not appear to be any limit to its progress, and no element of nature can say to it, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther!" The number of those who speak it is constantly increasing. In this country, for instance, the immigration amounts to thousands upon thousands every year from all nationalities. The German, the Italian, the Swede, the Norwegian, the Austrian, the Pole, and the Frenchman help in greater or less proportions to swell the aggregate, and most of these acquire a knowledge of English, and it is taught to their children, and several millions are added to our English speaking population every decade. The constant flow of our people abroad makes it an object of special pecuniary interest in the different countries they visit to cultivate a familiarity with our language, that they may profit by our liberality. Wherever an opportunity offers to invest capital or settle a new country it is sure to go, and it usually influences others more than it is influenced by them. The main reliance of any spoken tongue is its fitness to enter into the ordinary affairs of the people, and in this respect our own is unrivaled. It can accommodate itself to any kind of business, and to every species of enterprise. There is no people that it will not suit, and there is no pursuit that it cannot describe and follow in all its details. There are many inventions and discoveries to which we apply learned names compounded from Greek or Latin, when we can compound one from good English that would much better express the conception. It is not unusual for a man with a

smattering of the classics to plume himself upon an appellation for some new article, when, if he would exercise one half the ingenuity he could find a more suitable one in the words of ordinary conversation. There is no reason in compelling a man to understand such hybrids as phonograph, graphophone, telephone, bicycle, velocipede, and such like, for articles of common use, and which very few understand, and which have really no meaning at all to the great mass of those who use them. But there is no man so void of common sense as the one who is affected with a mania for terms of this kind. He is either a sciolist or a pedant, and there is little hope that he will ever see his extravagance. There are many people who seem to think that a knowledge of any language but their own is the end of education. We can all remember when most of the years devoted to education were taken up with the study of Greek and Latin. This was fitting to the time, for there was not much else to be known. But the world is not the same, and the range of knowledge has been infinitely extended. The English was not then what it is now. Its literature and philosophy, its arts and science, have taken on a splendor that surpasses all that was known to Greece or Rome, and those who speak it need go to no other country and no other age than their own for any branch of learning. It is, therefore, a matter of great importance that its cultivation should not be postponed for that of other tongues, ancient or modern; and it is gratifying to know that its history and structure engage the best scholarship in the countries where it is spoken. The languages of the world are still subjects of much speculation, and there is scarcely a reliable mode

of determining their kind or the number spoken by the different races and sub-races on the continents and islands. Many of them have never yet been explored by any European people, and if it were possible to enumerate them, it would probably be impossible to classify them into systems of ethnological distinctions. An approximation to the lingual conditions of the world is all that can be at present expected, nor is it, indeed, necessary to our purpose that a greater degree of certainty should be obtained. The diligent explorer could give only a few of the three thousand that are supposed to be spoken, and conjecture from apparent resemblances that these few belonged to some stock from which they had branched off. For instance, in the islands of Polynesia there are several races of men, and a classification has been attempted on the basis of color, some being brown, others black, and many of them yellow, and a common origin is inferred for all those of the same hue. The same result is sought for in certain resemblances of their language, these being traced to the nearest continent, the black being assigned to Africa, the brown to Asia, and the yellow to the Malayan races, whose language appears to have furnished, as is said, more words to the various dialects of the archipeligos than those noted from any other source except the Arabic. This theory may yield a solid ground for the judgment, but quite likely will ultimately turn out to be a fanciful speculation. I refer to this simply to illustrate the impossibility of a universal language to be spoken by every being the same as it is spoken by every other. Human speech is not a contrivance to be put upon a procrustean bed, and stretched and contracted in con-

formity with a general standard. It ever has varied, and no doubt ever will vary, with ethnological distinctions as long as the latter shall exist, and any attempt to introduce one would be attended with the signal infirmity that it would not remain the same during a single revolution of the earth upon its axis. The human intellect cannot invent a language, for the reason that it grows out of the surroundings and necessities of man's condition, and cannot be prepared for him *a priori*. No one has ever formed an original one consciously, and all attempts to construct one will probably prove a failure. It would be like asking a man to walk before he had the use of his limbs. The vocal organs develop like his other powers, and they pick up a word at a time, not according to any system or order, but as the word is presented, which is the symbol of the object to be expressed. Objects or ideas must come first, not language, which is only a symbol of the idea. Hence, the attempt of the late Stephen Pearl Andrews to invent a new language on what he termed a scientific basis, reversed the order of nature and was going back to the old exploded philosophy that we must settle the principles of a thing first, and then observe phenomena afterwards, a theory that befogged the world till Bacon exposed its fallacy.

It is not improbable that a language will ultimately be formed that shall be understood by the civilized races, especially by those that are nearest in blood and continuity. There may, for instance, be a general union formed among those who have sprung from the same Teutonic ancestors. The French are themselves more than half Teutonic, from the time that Rollo with his

Teutonic hordes seized one of its fairest provinces and propagated their blood through the veins of France while adopting its language. The Latin element, that so plentifully appears in our English, assimilates it not grudgingly to the Latin based tongues of Italy and Spain; and the nations that dwell in the East, like Hungary, Russia, and the Slavonic provinces, are not so unlike their western neighbors as to present a barrier to a lingual union, to which all may contribute and all can understand. From the universal prevalence of our own and its absorptive tendencies it would probably predominate over all the others, and the language thus formed would be of an English type and simplicity. It may be safely affirmed that none of the tongues now spoken in Europe are adapted to the general use of mankind except the English. For instance, the German is given to harsh sounds, and employs consonants very largely in all its dialects. The Italian, on the other hand, is full of soft sounds, and deals largely in the vowels. The difference is so marked in these two that a person unacquainted with either would notice it at once; but in English the vowels and the consonants are so placed as almost to alternate with each other. This produces a very marked degree of strength and harmony, and gives to its delivery a power and energy that are wanting in the two just mentioned. In French the liquids and gutturals are so arranged as to make a very pleasing and graceful form of speech, well suited to its numerous words of ceremony and phrases of personal address. When a Frenchman begins to speak you can tell the difference from all others, for he utters his sentences in a manner so rapid and runs his words

into each other so that they appear to be joined together, as if they constituted but one vocable. When we consider the diversity between nations we get some idea of their difference in language. A man from the North of Europe sounds the consonants, and drops the vowels; one from the South does just the opposite; but an English speaker does neither; he arranges them in such sequence as to give the clearest utterance to both. It is therefore easier to understand him than the others. When he visits other countries he can almost make himself understood by using plain English, for the reason that it sounds more natural than those that abound in more consonants than vowels, or those that have more of the latter than the former. It has an advantage also in the great simplicity of its syntax. The words follow each other to express the idea just as it arises in the mind, and all the relations of the sentence are distinctly indicated by the particles that connect them together. The most illiterate can follow a speaker with perfect ease so long as he uses pure English. It is only when he introduces the foreign elements that the former gets confused, and is unable to understand what is said. A rustic from one of the back districts heard Daniel Webster make a speech, and did not think him much of an orator because he could understand every word he spoke. The Saxon words are so very simple and at the same time expressive that any one of ordinary intelligence can follow a discourse without an effort. A man who is convinced that he knows what is said feels a degree of satisfaction and is happy in the thought of being quite equal to the one who is speaking. If we address ourselves to any person who is not acquainted with

English, it is necessary to speak it very distinctly, and with emphasis upon the leading words, and in nine cases out of ten you will not only arrest attention but impress your meaning. The motions and gestures that usually accompany what we say enable the person addressed to comprehend their import. When, therefore, we speak to the native of another country we should use great care to speak deliberately, and to use such gestures as will convey the sense of the words. If they listen attentively, we can go over the entire globe without an interpreter and without knowing any language but our own. In the case of a foreigner coming into our country, he can usually understand us sufficiently to make his wants known, and to transact such business as does not require more than ordinary diligence, and he can go about the country without any danger in the usual way of travel. But when we come to talk to him out of the ordinary course, he soon picks up enough to go into matters of detail, and before he is aware of it he can express himself clearly on a variety of topics.

These examples prove the facility with which English can become a general language, and its general diffusion establishes the probability of its becoming so. In fact the world is learning English everywhere. The foreign missionary work is to be carried on in English. My excellent friend the Rev. Dr. Mutchmore, of Philadelphia, in his recent book of travels remarks that the missionary need not bother himself about the language of the people among whom he labors,

“but should compel them to learn ours. Supersede their language in conversation as quickly as possible.” (P. 316.)

And again, on page 347, he has the following passage :

“And in this line of action the mission schools and theological seminaries are changing their instruction into English ;”

and he gives several instances where these institutions have already made this change.

There are many languages that can be used for local and national regions and particular races of men. Every distinct tribe has a form of speech in some respect peculiar to itself, and has been influenced by its situation and circumstances. The Indians of North America have had innumerable dialects, whose number has never been clearly ascertained ; and the thousand and one inhabited islands in the ocean have had as many more. Indeed, all these races differ in nothing so much as in their language. Each tribe has its peculiar dialect, and each island is isolated from the others as much by language as by the ocean that separates them. We also know that among civilized nations the lingual distinctions are at least equally great, and that it is only by careful study that we can learn the language of any other. Still the necessities of intercourse are so constant that a species of mutual dealing is maintained, and they are coming nearer and nearer. The uninterrupted stream of travel is swelling into very great dimensions, and the world is getting mixed up considerably. If we may judge from present appearances, the nations will intermingle still more as time passes on. This tendency to bring those who are separated by national and race distinctions into closer relations, is greatly precipitated by immigration and travel, through the use of steam and electricity, by railway and steamship, and by the commercial intercourse required by the successful prosecution of trade and the planting and settlement of colonies. The most distant

peoples are brought into neighborhood, and those who are nearest in blood or position are assimilating in their sympathies and interests. What a contrast is displayed by a book like Trollope's on the United States and that recently published by Prof. Byrce. This state of things marks an era in the world's history and calls for lingual conditions never dreamed of before. The question arises, what are the prospects of the English tongue, and what are its resources to meet this new phase of human speech?

In the first place its expansive genius and its use by more people and on a greater extent of the earth's surface than any other of the Aryan tongues, would seem to insure a preference for it in the evolution of the biologic law, and there is also a similarity to most other tongues to be found in its polyglot elements. A great portion is derived directly from the French, and numberless Latin terms have come through the same medium. We have colonized extensively from Spain and Italy. The Germanic and Scandinavian dialects are represented in the very basis of its structure, and words of the most familiar converse are derived from the old Gothic storehouse. Our terms in astronomy and numbers come from the Arabic, and many of our most beautiful terms are like those in the tales of "Arabian Nights." We have Persian, India, and Chinese words in considerable abundance, and, indeed, there is no people that has not contributed to our vocabulary; and such is the plastic power of English that it chips and fashions these different epithets like a skillful mason, and fits them into the edifice of English speech; and before a single generation has passed away they look as if they had been to the

manor born. It is this inherent power to vitalize all comers with its own forms and grammar that keeps it from being anything else than English. Have we not here a veritable foundation for a language that shall meet all the requirements of a larger and ever increasing diffusion among the races who have common interests, and are alike affected by the progress of society? *

*The following newspaper article (which comes to hand as I am correcting the proofs of the last passages of the text) is so appropriate to the question of a universal language, and the preference for English is so clearly and strongly expressed, that I deem an apology unnecessary for its reproduction here:

The Germans not only look upon their language as an integral and essential part of the national life, but the more cultivated classes revere it with an almost idolatrous veneration. Notwithstanding the difficulties presented by its indistinct and crabbed type, its intricate and half-illegible script, its arbitrary genders, its highly artificial inflectional system, and its illogical syntax, its study is extolled not only as a means of mental culture and discipline, but as an impulse to originality of thought and expression. These facts render all the more noteworthy the leading article in the April number, just issued, of Prof. Hans Delbrück's "Preussische Jahrbücher," perhaps the most prominent of German literary reviews. It is from the pen of Dr. A. Schroer, professor of philology at the University of Freiburg, and its subject is the importance of introducing into the schools the study of a universal language (Weltsprache).

The writer begins by condemning all attempts, however scientific, to construct an artificial language, like Volapük. No language which possesses neither literature, historical development, nor linguistic relations can ever serve as a medium of general communication, for the reason that no one will take the trouble to acquire it, merely as a "tool of trade," until it becomes universal; therefore, it never can become universal. Such attempts, however, are not only idle and aimless, because they can never obtain the general consent of mankind, but they are useless, "for," says Prof. Schroer, "there exists already a universal language, i. e., a language which, by its spread over the whole earth, and by the ease with which it may be learned, has already gained such a long step in advance that neither natural nor artificial means can deprive it of its assured position as the future medium of international intercourse. And this language is the English."

It is interesting to find this fact acknowledged and promulgated by one of the foremost of German periodicals. During the present century the English-speaking population of the world has increased fivefold—from possibly 25,000,000 at its commencement to at least 125,000,000 at its close. No other language has ever been so rapidly developed. No fact in civil history is more significant than this. In all quarters of the world the English language is the conquering tongue. The wide spread of the English colonial system, the marvelous growth of the United States, and the facility with which it absorbs every foreign element bear witness to this great fact. Therefore, Prof. Schroer advocates making the study of the English obligatory, not necessarily to the exclusion of Latin and Greek, but at least in conjunction with them. "This," says he, "is not a question of taste or of rivalry between the 'moderns' and the 'ancients.' It is simply a historical necessity."

Prof. Schroer is careful to warn his readers not to set their aim too high, for to learn to speak and write fluently and correctly a language which holds so high a place in the scale of culture and refinement as the English, is "monstrously difficult," but for the average man this is not necessary, for even the average Englishman has but a limited command of his mother tongue, and the daily intercourse of life requires but a small and easily acquired vocabulary. This is true of every language, but the absence of puzzling genders, and inflections, and syntactical form renders the English easy, in comparison with others.

We have seen that a man learns his own language by use and constant effort. He picks up one word, then another, he forms them into sentences and periods, and finally talks and writes. This is the work of time, but it goes on without much study, and by no particular rules. The words come to express a sensation or an idea. This is the natural way of learning any language, and it is very much in this way that English is taught at present throughout the world. There is, of course, no expectation that we can change the language of mankind into any one dialect, but we may expect that there will be such a diffusion of our own that its uniformity and knowledge will amount to something very like it, and that no education in any country will be considered as coming up to the most ordinary standard without it.

"The English," concludes Prof. Schroer, "is the world speech, and will, to all appearance, become more and more so every year."—[From the Philadelphia Public Ledger and Daily Transcript.]

THE END.

INDEX.

A

- ADVERBS, end in *ly*, 105
Adverbs, in Kentish dialect, 90
A and *an* from *one*, 108
Adjectives, comparison of, 78
Again-bite of Conscience, 89, 90
Alfred the Great, 26, 32, 61, 75
Alexanderine metre, 103
Alexander, 67, 102, 104
Alliteration in Saxon versification, 29, 67, 50
Ancren Riwe (Ancient Rule), 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 67, 68, 69
Anglo-Norman, corruption of, 71
Anglo-Saxon, 5, 12, 24, 25, 26, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 60,
62, 63, 66, 162-169, 198, 174, 175, 198
Anomalies in dialects, 74
Aquinas, Thomas, 192
Aryan, preserved in Lithuania, 10, 11. Indo-European, 11. Asia
their home, 13
Armorica, 97
Aristotle, 74
Arthur, Round Table, 32, 46, 45, 54, 55, 68, 97-100
Arithmates, Joseph of, 99
Attila the Hun, 23
Auxiliaries, *shall*, *will*, and *would*, 93, 48

B

- BACON, FRANCIS, 181, 276. Jonson's description of, 278. Hobbes,
his disciple, 278. His *Novum Organum*, 279. His Advance-

- ment of Learning, 276-7. Hallam on his Latin style, 279. Lovejoy's book, 279. Bacon's theory of spirits in bodies, 279, 280. His *Idola*, 281. His compositions in English, 282. Baconian philosophy, 283. His language, 284-5-6
- Bacon, Roger, wrote in Latin, 105. His works, 105.
- Barbour, John, his Bruce, 143 to 146. Extract from, 145. Pinkerton's remarks upon the Bruce, 147
- Baxter, Richard, 343
- Ballads and songs, 223-4
- Bards, Cymric, 97
- Bede, 26, 27, 33
- Beowulf, Poem of, 16-19
- Benot de St. Maure, 104
- Bibles, the English, 87, 150, 152
- Boethius, 33
- Bohan, Sir Humphrey de, 100
- Bracton, Henry, 106
- British Museum, 72
- Brittany, a Celtic Colony, 97
- Book of Demeanor, 225-6
- Brock (on the Ancient Rule), 62
- Brown, Sir Thomas, 294
- Brunne, Robert de, 81-85
- Brut of Layamon, 20, 46, 47, 50, 52, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47. Fable of, 44, 45. Words in, 49. Versification, 50, 51. Character and travels of, 53, 68. Lines from, 55, 56
- Braunanburgh, a war song, 16
- Butler, his *Hudibras*, 320. Taine's opinion of, 320. Extract, 321. His metre, 322. Defaces our language, 322. Popularity of, 323.
- Bunyan, John, 345-354. His *Pilgrim's Progress*, 346. Its Vocabulary, 93 per cent. Anglo-Saxon, 351

C

- CANON TAYLOR, 13
- Canterbury, Town of, 23

- Cædmon, 25-29
 Canute, 29
 Caledonians, 134
 Caxton, 84
 Celts, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 74, 75, 97, 99
 Charlemagne, 46, 67
 Chaucer, 152-182. His poems, 157-8. His use of Norman French words, 160. Description of Canterbury Tales, 167. The words he has made standard English, 172-3. His *e* final, 176-7. His plural in *es*. His *nam* or *nys* joins a pronoun to a verb, 178. *e* final in adjectives, 178. How his verbs end. *Yng* for present participle, 178. Influence of his poems, 181. Midland dialect, 186
 Cicero, 43
 Church, Ordinances against the, 194
 Clergy, Satires upon the, 193
 Colet at Oxford, 189, 192
 Colgrim and Childric, 55
 Conquest, the Norman, 39
 Conybeare, 29
 Cornwall, 65
 Cranmer, 195-6
 Crawford, 13
 Cromwell, Thomas, 195
 Cursor Mundi, 85

D

- DANES, the, 32, 35, 64
 Dares and Dictys, 104
 Defoe, 221
 Demosthenes, 59
 Dialects, origin of, 64. North and South, 105. Terminations dropped, 105. Three in Early English, 75. Diversity of, 180
 Dorsetshire, 59
 Dramatists, the early, 207-211. Writings of, 212. Marlowe, Green, Nash, Massinger, Beaumont-Fletcher, 221-225

- Dryden, his rule for translating, 69
 Dryden, 324-340. His satires, 324. His *Absalom and Achitophel*, 324-5-6. Ingredients of his language, 326-7-8. Proportions thereof, 327-8-9. His language, 320. His *MacFlecknoe*, 330. His *Virgil*, 331. Ode, *id.* His poetical measure and his works in prose, 333. Essay on dramatic poetry, 334-5. He defends rhyme, 335. Abandons it, 336. His vigorous style, 336-7-8-9. Dr. Beattie's opinion of his genius, 339

E

- EARLY ENGLISH, a knowledge of important, 9, 71, 72, 73. Early English Text Society, 71. Alliteration in, 73. Inflexions, 73. Three dialects in, 73. Literary remains, 96. Alliterative poems, 93. Syntax, 100. Literature, 108. *es, an, en*, 109. Earliest form in poetry, 43. *e* final in *Mandeville*, 130. In Chaucer, 131, 176
 Earle, Mr., 89
 Elizabethan Age, 204
 Elizabeth, fondness for display and its effect upon the language, 213. Views of a writer thereon, 213. Extract from Taine, 214
 Ella, 11
 Ellis, Mr., 72
 Edward the Confessor, 35
 England, settlement of by Saxons and other tribes, 22. Nationality changed, 23. Invaded by Danes, 34
 English, position of words in, 201-3. Earliest form in verse, 43. Formation of, 41. Anglo-Saxon in, 41. Glossaries, 65. See Early English. The Renaissance, 222. In the 18th century, 360-1. The Augustan age of our idiom, 362. The authors named, present position of, 385-405. Demand for English everywhere, 386. New method in, 387. English of Puritans and Cavaliers, 388-9. Necessity of learning it, 390. Dissemination of English, 390. On the Mississippi, 391. On the Pacific coast, New Mexico, Canada, the West Indies, Central and South America, India, Asia, and Africa, 393. Polynesia, Australia, the islands in the Pacific, 394. Immigration in this country, 395.

In literature and philosophy, 396. The vowels in, 400. How to speak it, 401. Foreign missionary work in English, 401. Its general use, 403. Its polyglot elements, 403

Erasmus, 199

Esquimaux, 10

Eastra, the Saxon deity, 19

Essex, 65

Euphues (John Lyly), 214-220

Exodus, Genesis, 66

F

FABLE OF LAYAMON'S BRUT, 44-5

Father, the same in Aryan dialects, 12

For used for *to*, 105

Fortescue, 186-7

Franklin, Dr., 363

French, Norman, 40, 66, 160

Fletcher, Beaumont, 207

Ford, 208

G

GEOFFROY OF MONMOUTH, 44, 97

Genesis, Exodus, 65-6, 71, 85-7

German races, 25

Gildas, 26

Gloucester, Robert of, his Chronicle, 76-81

Gospels rendered into Anglo-Saxon, 33

Goths, 17, 18. Various names of, 34

Gothic runes, 35. Particles, 67-8

Gower, 186

Grammatical forms, 62

Grammar, King Henry's, 228. Lyly's, 228. Ben Jonson's, 228.

Bullokar's, 228.

Greeks, 74

- Greene, 222, 225
 Grendel, the, 16, 17
 Grocyn, introduced Greek at Oxford, 192
 Grimm, Jacob, on English, 201
 Gautier, Phillip, 103
 Guest, 51
 Gwain, the Green Knight, 45

H

- H*, this letter sounded and suppressed, 101
 Hallam, 43
 Handlynge Synne, 83
 Hastings, battle of, 49, 39, 71-76
 Havelock, the Dane, 101. Sound of *h* in, 101
 Hayward, the historian, anecdote of, 204
 Hengist, 18, 23, 75
 Henry the VIII., 192-195. His assertion of the seven sacraments, 193. Styled Defender of the Faith by Leo X., 193. His passion for Anne Boleyn, 194. His marriage with Catherine of Aragon, 195. Advice of Thomas Cromwell, 195. The Reformation not to be attributed to him, 195
 Heptarchy, 26, 63
Hi equivalent to they, 87
 Hilda the Abbess, 27
 Historical introduction to Middle English, 111-125
 Holland, did the Aryans settle it? 14. Described, 14. Life among its people, 15. Their worship and superstitions, 15. The Eddas and Scalds, 16
 Holy Graal, the, 99
 Hooker, Richard, 288. His style, 288. An abstract, 289
Hope, how conjugated in Early English as a verb, 73
 Horsa, 23-75
 Hrothgar, King of Denmark, 16
 Humber, the, 43
 Hugh of the Royal Palace, 99-105

Huxley, 13, 63
Hwas, for *whose*, 109

I

IDYLS OF THE KING, 46, 99
It, a modern invention, 109
Ing, *ying*, 105
 Inflexion, 226-7

J

JOHNSON, DR., 220. His *Lives of the Poets*, 292. His style, language, and an extract, 367-8
 Jonson, Ben, 209. An extract, 210. His mention of Shakespeare, 210, 211. His book on grammar, 211
 Joseph of Exceter, his poems, 104
 Junius, 29

K

KENT, 23
 Kentish adverbs, 90
 Kentish speech and idiom, 90
 King Horn, 101
 King Lear, 48
 Knox, 187

L

LAMB, CHARLES, 209
 Lancelot, 45, 99
 Langland, 20. His archaic words and style, 154-157. Author of *Piers the Plowman*, 156

- Langtoft, Peter de, 82
- Language, the origin of, 1. Among civilized races, 3
- Language, English, 4. Admission of other ingredients, 4. Its vocabulary, 5. Anglo-Saxon predominates, 5. Our mother tongue, 8. Object of, 10. Of Greenland, Russia, Poles, and Laplanders, 10. Indo-European, 11. Affinity of European languages, 12. Of literature, 74. Alliteration in, 84. Fusion of Norman and English, 103. Growth of language, 245. Languages of the world, 396-7. A universal language, 398. English best adapted, 399
- Layamon, his *Brut*, 20, 43-49. Versification, 50-1. Character and travels, 53-68. Lines from, 55-6
- Latin derivatives, examples of, 229-233. Proportion of in various writers, Hooker, Brown, Bacon, Milton, Robertson, Johnson, and Gibbons, 233. Writers in Medieval Latin, Henry Bracton, Duns Scotus, William Occam, 106. Words inherited from them, *real*, *virtual*, *entity*, and many others, 107
- Latin, 61, 65, 66, 105
- Lifting, 137
- Linacre translates Virgil and Homer, 192
- Literature under the Restoration, 316-318
- Literary English, 374-5
- Locke, John, 354-5
- Lollards, 150
- Lithuania, 10
- Lycurgus, 74
- Lyly, John, author of *Euphues*, 205. Called king of letters, and reputed author of a new English, 214. Sample of his flattery to the Queen, and his labored style, the story of *Euphues*, his influence on subsequent writers, 214-219
- Lily, William, his grammar, 128
- Lydgate, 186

M

- MACKINTOSH, 33
- Macpherson, James, 98

- Madden, Sir Frederick, 44, 48-9, 51, 56, 69, 88
- Malcolm the III., 137
- Malory, Sir Thomas, 99. His *Morte d' Arthur*, 99
- Mandeville, Sir John, 126-133. His *Happy Isle*, 128. Great number of his manuscripts, 129. Introduction of Latin words, 129. His work the first in Middle English, 130. His final *e*. His liberality, 132. His spelling, 131
- Manning, Robert, 80-83
- Mapes, Walter, 99
- Marlowe, 208. His *Faustus*, 208. First to use blank verse. His *Tamberlaine the Great*, 208
- Marsh, 82, 103, 129
- Medieval Saintship, 91-2
- Merlin the Wizard, 99
- Metaphysical poets, 292
- Midland dialects, 65
- Midland superseded all others, 105
- Milton, 37, 99, 297-316. Compared with Homer, 398. Condition of our language in his day, 312. His influence upon it, 309. Invocation to his mother tongue, 300. His prose, 301. Freedom of speech vindicated, 302-3. Extracts, 304. The *Comus*, 305. The *Nativity* and other poems, 305-6. His *Paradise Lost*, 306. Addison's criticism, 307. His use of words, 308. His inversion, 308. Description of *Paradise Lost*, 310-11. His versification, 315
- Minstrels among the Normans and Celts, 75-6
- Modern preachers speak in Anglo-Saxon derivatives, 95
- More, Sir Thomas, 190-2
- Monosyllables in English, 380-2
- Morris, Dr. Richard, 73
- Morton, James, 57
- Morte d' Arthur*, 99
- Mysteries, moralities, and miracle plays, 212

N

- NASH, THOMAS, 219-221. His *Jack Wilton*, 221. His pure English,

- Natural objects deified, 20
 Neologisms, French and Latin, 65
Ness as a suffix, 38
 Norman Conquest, 39
 Norman French, 39-41, 65
 Normans in Scotland, 139
 Nouns, plural in *s*, *es*, and *en*
 Novels, English, 375-378. Imitation of real life, 375. Collection of, by Mrs. Barbauld, 377. Impurities of expression in, 376

O

- OCCAM, WILLIAM, his works, 106
 Oliphant, Mr., 84
 Origin of local dialects, 64-5
 Ormulum, 47, 64, 88, 89
 Ossian, 98
 Ossian, an example of, 136
 Owl and Nightingale, 65, 66

P

- PALERNE, WILLIAM, and the Werwolf, 100
 Participles ending in *ing*, *ynge*, 105
 Piers the Plowman, 20
 Peninsular war, changes in taste caused by, 212
 Periods distinguished by great works, 296
 Percy, essays, 26
 Picts, 22, 133
 Poetry in the 18th century, including Gray, Pope, Goldsmith, Collins, Young, Beattie, Thomson, Burns, 378-380
 Preachers use Anglo-Saxon words, 95
 Preachers of the 17th century. Their influence on our language, 291-2, 355, 358
 Pronouns, 63, 90, 108, 109, 197

Provincialisms, 65
 Provençal poetry, 67

R

RAWSON, edited an edition of *King Horn*, 102
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, 287. Founder of English speech in the South, 288
 Reformation, 193-197
 Renaissance in England, 189, 224
 Rhyme, early examples of, 50
 Richard Cœur de Lion, 76
 Richard Roll, Hermit of Hampole, 93-96
 Richardson, his novels, 375. Their translation into French, 375-6
 Roland, song of, 46-54
 Romance languages, 61
 Romance words, 81. In verse and prose, 97. By Norman poets, 100-213
 Romances of the Middle Ages, 102
 Romances of Alexander, 102

S

SAXONS, their mode of life and character, 6, 7, 17, 18, 19, 23
 Saintship and saints, 91, 92
 Scandinavians, 61, 64. Words of, 140, 141
 Scots, 22
 Scoti, 134
 Scotus, Duns, his works, 106
 Scott, Sir Walter, remarks, 142
 Scottish dialects, 133-142. Ellis's opinion of, 133. A dialect of the English language, 134. Poets, extracts, 183-6. Broad sound of the vowels, 135. Inglis of the Northern Lede, 135. The Border, 224
 Schoolmen, the, 107

- Semi-Saxon, 43, 65-67. Lingual ingredients, 71, 72. Orthography, 72
Se, seo, theat, 36, 81
Shultu, for shalt thou, 102
 Sidney, 219
 Skene's Celtic Scotland, 134
 Snorro metres, 17, 19
 Sound, sensations of, 1. Words derived from, 2. Sense and sound, 2.
 Views of Max Müller, 2. *th* and *w*, 35
 Suffolk or Midland, 65
 Spenser, 99, 290-1
 Solon, his laws in verse, 74
 Shakespeare, 234-274
 Spain, Romance writers of, 375
 Spelling, 131
 Swift, the Dean, 224. Represents the Saxon genius of English, 364.
 Extract, 364-5

T

- TAILLEFER, 75
 Tenacity of the vernacular, 40
 Tennyson's Idyls of the King, 99
 Thanet, the Island of, 23
 The Traveller, story of, 17
 The definite article from *þe*, 108. Old declension, *en, se, þæt*, 108.
This, they, their, 81
Th represented by the character *ð*, 86
 Theological controversialists, More, Cranmer, Elyot, Latimer, Ridley, Alymer, 196-7 Middle English assisted by, 196-7
 The Geste Historiale, 104
 Teutonic stock, 64
 Teutonic dialects, 25
 Trouvères, 67, 75
 Trojan Fables, 104-5
 Tweed, 35, 64
 Trench, Mr., 107

U

UTOPIA, 191

V

VERBS, weak and strong, 130. In English, 199. Auxiliaries, 199.
To write, 199. Inflexions, 200. Position of, 201. Use of, 227

W

WACE, 44

Waddington, William of, 83

Walton, Izaak, 341-343. His Complete Angier. Simplicity of style.

His pure English. Williamson's opinion of. His words, 344

War of the Roses, 105, 187-8

Werwolf, William of Palerne, 100

Wickliffe, 147-150

Will, willing, willingly, 37-8

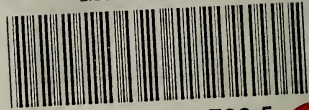
Words where the derivatives are lost, 3. *Parvenu*, 3. *Father*,
brother, sister, husband, mother, etc., 12. Of Danish origin,
32. Of Anglo-Saxon origin, 36. Compounding of, 37-38. Ob-
solete in Layamon, 77. In Shakespeare, 78. Of Celtic origin,
78. Teutonic origin, 23. *Love, wife, home*, 25, 26. Words that
have altered their spelling, 49. Words from old Norman, 103.

From the schoolmen, 107

Who, which, whom, etc., 197

Writings of the 13th century, 68. Of the 17th century, 341-343

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 003 234 726 5

